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The Guardian

Newspaper of the year

Labour's new homes pledge after seismic byelection win

Severin Carrell
Libby Brooks
Pippa Crerar

Labour is seeking to build on a historic byelection victory in Scotland by making a massive expansion of affordable homes a key pledge before the next general election.

The new commitment comes with the party under pressure to set out more of its defining policies, amid more evidence of voter disillusionment with the governments in Westminster and Holyrood. Yesterday Labour trounced the SNP with an overwhelming victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection - a win secured by a 20-point swing from the Scottish National party.

Following a result that far exceeded the party's expectations, Keir Starmer told Scottish Labour activists that they "blew the doors off".

The scale of the win sent shudders through Westminster yesterday - the Conservative vote in the seat collapsed, with both the Tory and Lib Dem candidates losing their deposits.

With the focus now turning to the party's conference, which begins in Liverpool tomorrow, its deputy leader, Angela Rayner, told the Guardian that a Labour government would oversee the biggest boost in affordable housing in England in a generation. In an extensive interview, she pledged to get tough on developers and reform planning rules, and said the Conservatives' national housing target of 300,000 a year - which they have failed to hit - should be the "benchmark" of what a Labour government would deliver.

"The whole housing market has been destroyed because we've had three decades of nowhere near enough social house building," Rayner said.

"Labour will ensure we deliver the biggest boost to 10 →

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Angela Rayner: 'I love campaigning, it's like playtime'
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PHOTO BY NARGES MOHAMMADI FOUNDATION/GETTY

Narges Mohammadi
Jailed Iranian activist wins Nobel peace prize

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Met police failing children at risk and victim blaming – official report

Vikram Dodd
Police and crime correspondent

The Metropolitan police is failing in its efforts to protect children from criminal and sexual exploitation while bungling efforts to find missing youngsters, a damning official report has found.

The findings have led Scotland Yard to accept its child protection services are in chaos. A senior officer admitted that "too often we are letting them down".

The policing inspectorate, which authored the report, said they were also concerned with "the frequency with which officers and staff use victim-blaming language".

In a humiliating rebuke, officials have ordered the Met to make emergency improvements. It comes after warnings first made seven years ago, by the same body, that Britain's biggest force was failing children.

The special inquiry was carried out by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) after being requested by the Mayor of London, who is also the capital's police and crime commissioner.

The Met was told it must "improve how it identifies and assesses risks, and how it responds, when children are reported missing" and must "improve its investigations when children are at risk of, or harmed by, criminal or sexual exploitation".

Drug gangs are known to hunt for vulnerable children to recruit, and concerns are growing about the risk of sexual abuse they face.

The full report will be released early next year but the inspectorate was so alarmed it has publicly made emergency demands that improvements be made by 31 December.

Lee Freeman, who led the inspection, told the Guardian that examining the Met's files threw up examples of failings that had to be urgently flagged to officers to ensure children were safe.

Freeman added: "Children who go missing, or are at risk of exploitation, are some of the most vulnerable in society. It is therefore concerning that the Metropolitan police's current approach to child protection requires immediate attention.



▲ *Concerns were raised about risks faced by children from drug gangs*

"The force must make sure that it is focused on the risks to children, and that officers and staff are also equipped to deal with those risks."

The policing inspectorate said: "We also found that many staff and officers responsible for grading risk showed a limited understanding of the links between children who go missing regularly and their criminal and sexual exploitation."

It is another part of the Met that its commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, has to improve urgently, with his force still in special measures over a series of failings. In terms of child protection, its officers and staff are affected by overwork, poor leadership and substandard or no proper training – with some breaking under the pressure, some leaving and others growing bitter.

The inspectorate highlighted victim blaming by police. It said: "We are particularly concerned about the frequency with which officers and staff use victim-blaming language.

"This highlights that officers and staff may not fully understand the potential risks to children. And this lack of understanding can result in ineffective police investigations, with important lines of enquiry being overlooked and children left unprotected."

Freeman said he believed Rowley was serious that the force would make the changes needed, both in how it organises and resources its services to protect children and the culture. Scotland Yard promised more resources and to transform how it protects children.

Commander Kevin Southworth, the Met's lead for public protection, said: "I am deeply concerned by the HMICFRS' findings that show that too often we are letting them down.

"Our officers want to keep children and young people safe – but we recognise they have not had the right support to do this every time. Officers need the time and resource to investigate the bigger picture around the circumstances they have come into contact with the police to then identify abuse and exploitation."



◀ *Direct action by climate activists last year included throwing soup on Vincent van Gogh's Sunflowers*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO OLMOS/THE GUARDIAN

Major donor to Just Stop Oil pulls out to fund Labour election win

Damien Gayle

Dale Vince, the green energy businessman, has said he would stop funding direct action climate groups such as Just Stop Oil and instead put his money towards getting the vote out for Labour at the next general election.

The Ecotricity founder, who has funded a string of disruptive environmental protest groups, has supported Just Stop Oil since its inception and has previously said his funding for the group has totalled "some hundreds of thousands".

This summer, Vince joined the climate protesters' campaign of slow marches in central London. He said that though he was still "comfortable with their methods", Just Stop Oil's tactics had not worked fast enough and it was time for a new strategy.

"The next general election will be the most important of my lifetime, perhaps any of our lifetimes," he wrote in the Guardian. "If we are to reverse 13 years of relentless damage to our economy and our environment, then we need a new approach.

"That's why rather than fund protest, I'm going to concentrate my support wholeheartedly on the British electorate voting the Conservative government out of power.

"Currently, Labour is the only party realistically equipped to reverse the regime's most damaging policies and has demonstrated commitment to both do so and embrace vital tenets of the green economy."

Vince has given at least £1.5m to Labour over the past decade, leading to accusations from the prime minister that "eco-zealots" were writing the opposition's energy policies.

Labour has said that if elected it would grant no new licences for oil and gas projects, a key demand of Just Stop Oil, as well as begin a programme of retrofit insulation for 19m homes, a major demand of the environmental activist group Insulate Britain.

Rishi Sunak last month announced U-turns on a number of green initiatives, pushing back the deadlines for halting the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and the phasing out of gas boilers in an effort to draw dividing lines between Conservative and Labour as his party trails in the polls.

Just Stop Oil said most of their funding comes from private individual donations; an initiative by Vince to match donations over 48 hours in May raised £340,000 for the campaign. The campaign has also received significant sums of money from the Climate Emergency Fund, a US philanthropic fund that directs money from donors to direct action groups around the world.

A Just Stop Oil spokesperson said: "We are grateful to Dale Vince for his amazing financial and moral support over the past year. He has willingly given up his time to help mobilise people to take action to end new oil and gas. We can all see the need to remove this genocidal government from office and so we wish Dale well in his next campaign.

"However, we remain convinced that politics is utterly broken and the Labour party is tinkering around the edges while the world burns. More and more people are coming round to what really works – civil resistance."

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It's a Naomissance! How supermodel Naomi Campbell transcended the world of fashion



Campbell with Carla Bruni, Claudia Schiffer, Donatella Versace, Cindy Crawford and Helena Christensen at a 2017 Versace show

PHOTOGRAPHS: DANIELE VENTURELLI/ WIREIMAGE; SCOTT GARFITT/INVISION





Campbell modelling for Hugo Boss's autumn/winter 2023 campaign this year and, far left, at the Cannes film festival in May

PHOTOGRAPH: HUGO BOSS

Chloe Mac Donnell

She was the first black model to appear on the cover of French Vogue and a muse to designers including Gianni Versace.

She has lip-synced in George Michael's Freedom! '90 video and been name-checked in a Beyoncé song. But now four decades after she started her career, Naomi Campbell is once again making history.

This week London's V&A museum announced that its next major fashion exhibition would be dedicated to the British supermodel – the first time that a model will be the focus of an exhibition.

Past record-breaking visitor number spectacles have been dedicated to icons such as David Bowie and Christian Dior. Naomi, with a first name only title, hints at the magnitude of Campbell's fame, but beyond this the V&A's recognition cements Campbell's shift from catwalk model to bona fide cultural icon.

Alongside designer pieces from Campbell's own wardrobe, her close friend, the editor-in-chief of British Vogue, Edward Enninful, is curating a selection of her greatest fashion photography while another section will spotlight her philanthropic work.

Speaking to the Guardian, Enninful said: "I knew from the day we met, Naomi had something different. She is magnetic when you see her model, but she always had such big ambitions. Her charity work, her creativity – they're all testament to what a tour de force she is."

Scouted aged 15, Campbell's stratospheric rise from Streatham schoolgirl to 90s supermodel is the stuff of legend. However, now aged 53 her profile has never been higher as she continues to defy industry norms and a culture fixated on youth.

Last week Sarah Burton chose Campbell to close her final show as creative director for Alexander McQueen, resulting in a viral video of the model wiping away a singular tear as she exited the catwalk.

Even celebrities half her age are looking to her for inspiration. On Tuesday, the Euphoria star Zendaya wore a gold Louis Vuitton top, first seen on Campbell in 2004.This isn't a renaissance, we are in the era of the Naomissance.

Osman Ahmed, fashion features director at i-D magazine, describes her as "a Teflon-coated survivor". "I think what adds to her allure is that she's a black girl from Streatham who made it big – no famous parents, the only woman of colour in shows and campaigns for decades."

Her current surge in popularity is underlined by an Apple TV documentary which tells the tale of her and her super contemporaries' rise to fame – and TikTok – where a new generation fascinated by 90s nostalgia has discovered the idol.

Users make video montages dedicated to *that* walk and roundups of the best of her 600+ magazine covers. On eBay, original covers fetch anything from £16 to £240 plus.

Even more controversial moments, including allegedly receiving blood diamonds and arriving to do her community service shifts in couture, have been repurposed by Gen Z as memes. "She is the personification of self actualisation, which is wildly aspirational for not only those in the fashion community but throughout the world," says Kyle Hagler, Campbell's ex-manager and founder of the brand consultancy No Smoking LLC.

She has been instrumental in launching the careers of designers such as Alexander McQueen and Virgil Abloh alongside models including Adut Akech, who refers to her as her "second mother."

Her influence now transcends fashion. Drawing upon her own experiences of racism, including being paid less than her white peers, Campbell is a vocal advocate for inclusivity. "Diversity is not a trend," she told Emily Maitlis in an appearance on Newsnight in 2019.

An "honorary granddaughter" to Nelson Mandela, in 2018 she addressed mourners at the funeral of his former wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. She has interviewed the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, while last week she was pictured at a dinner with President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Today, Campbell has the unique alchemy of resonating with Generation X who grew up alongside her and now wield significant spending power and Generation Z, a burgeoning group of consumers that brands are keen to foster.

Recently, Campbell was appointed an ambassador to Boss, a spin-off contemporary brand from Hugo Boss, which this month sees her posing alongside the 23-year-old TikToker Khaby Lame in a billboard campaign.

Nadia Kokni, of Hugo Boss, said: "Her positive spirit and energy are something that really resonates with our brand and our consumers. There is no one else on the planet like her."





Highs and lows
From sass to crass

Highs 2007 For her final day of community service at a Manhattan sanitation unit in 2007, Naomi Campbell wore a sequinned Dolce & Gabbana gown, left.

2018 Campbell appeared with five of the original supermodels at the Gianni Versace tribute show.

2022 In very supermodel fashion, the 51-year-old introduced her first baby to the world via the cover of Vogue magazine.

Lows 1993 She lost her balance in 12-inch heels on the Vivienne Westwood catwalk, left. Other designers asked if she would fall for them too. "I know my value. If I walk for you, you'll get your press."

1994 Campbell admitted she did not write her debut models-and-murder novel, Swan, saying: "I just did not have the time to sit down and write a book."

2010 When called upon to testify at the war crimes trial of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor in The Hague, Campbell told the judge that it was "a big inconvenience" for her.

Jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi wins Nobel peace prize


◀ Narges Mohammadi, pictured in 2008, is serving multiple jail sentences in Iran. She has vowed to 'never stop striving for the realisation of democracy, freedom and equality'
PHOTOGRAPH: VAHID SALEMI/AP

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

Narges Mohammadi, the most prominent of Iran's jailed women's rights advocates, has vowed to stay in the country and continue her activism after winning the 2023 Nobel peace prize.

"I will never stop striving for the realisation of democracy, freedom and equality," she said in a prewritten statement released after the announcement. "Surely, the Nobel peace prize will make me more resilient, determined, hopeful and enthusiastic on this path, and it will accelerate my pace."

Mohammadi has campaigned for women's rights and the abolition of the death penalty and an improvement of prison conditions inside Iran.

She is serving multiple sentences in Tehran's Evin prison amounting to about 12 years' imprisonment, according to the rights organisation Front Line Defenders, the latest of the many periods she has been detained. Charges against her include spreading propaganda against the state.

"The Norwegian Nobel committee has decided to award the 2023 Nobel peace prize to Narges Mohammadi for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all," the committee said in its citation.

Mohammadi has been active from within prison, warning of nationwide protests by publishing letters about the state of prisons and detention centres, as well as violence against prisoners and detainees.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian dual national who shared a prison cell with Mohammadi in Evin, said: "I am so pleased for her. It makes me cry. She did so much for all of us in Evin.

"Narges is an inspiration and a pillar to the women in the female ward in Evin for her fearless fight against violation of women's rights, use of solitary confinement and execution in the judicial system in Iran.

"This award belongs to every single Iranian woman who, one way or another, has been and remain to be a victim of injustice in Iran."

The award will be viewed as a tribute to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran that rocked the clerical establishment last year but has been suppressed, with many activists either killed or in jail.

The protests were sparked by the death in police custody of a young Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, after she had been arrested for not wearing the hijab in line with state rules. The conflict over the wearing of the hijab continues.

Mohammadi is also the deputy head of the Defenders of Human Rights Center, a non-governmental organisation led by Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel peace prize laureate.

The committee added: "Her courageous fight has come at a great personal cost." In recent years, Mohammadi has not been able to live with her family, who were forced to leave Iran. Her relatives said that Narges would not be able to hear about the award until today since she is not allowed to take calls on a Thursday or Friday.

> *'This award belongs to every woman who, has been a victim of injustice in Iran'*
>
> **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**
> *On what the award symbolises*

Mohammadi's husband, Taghi Rahmani, said the prize would further encourage her struggle and the movement she leads.

"This Nobel prize will embolden Narges's fight for human rights, but more importantly, this is in fact a prize for the Woman, Life, Freedom [movement]," Rahmani told Reuters in an interview at his home in Paris, where he has lived in exile with their children since shortly after Mohammadi was imprisoned in 2015.

Iran yesterday denounced the award, saying "we condemn this biased and political move".

A defiant voice for women's rights in Iran

Narges Mohammadi, the most articulate and unflinching voice of the Iranian human rights movement, and now Nobel peace prize winner, has spent so long in prison, serving overlapping sentences and defiantly speaking out from behind bars, that her family are not sure they will ever speak to her again, let alone meet.

Her husband and twins exiled in France have been banned from direct communication for 18 months. She believes she will not be released, and still faces a further 154 lashings.

Those who know her say the 51-year-old is not headstrong and is far from immunised to the pain inflicted on her by ill-health, prison, or the fate of her fellow prisoners, including death. She once said: "The price of the struggle is not only torture and prison, it is a heart that breaks with every regret and a pain that strikes to the marrow of your bones."

In her book White Torture, which expresses the horror of solitary confinement, she describes the mind-bending fear and anxiety, and the paradox of dependence on your jailer. The book contains interviews with political prisoners and was written during a brief period outside jail.

"Solitary confinement means being locked in a very small space. Four walls and a small iron door that are all the same colour, often white. There is no natural light inside the cell. There is no fresh air. No sound is heard there, and you cannot talk or associate with other human beings," she wrote.

"News and information do not reach you. There are no newspapers, magazines, books, paper or pens. You have nothing in there except three thin, run-down blankets and a shirt and pants. An interrogator can allow you to use a bathroom and toilet or not."

Mohammadi grew up in the central city of Zanjan. Her father was a cook and a farmer. Her mother's family was political, and after the Islamic revolution in 1979 toppled the monarchy, an activist uncle and two cousins were arrested.

She studied nuclear physics at college in the city of Qazvin, where she met her husband, Taghi Rahmani, who has spent a total of 17 years in prison. She began a career in journalism, working for newspapers that were, at the time, part of the reformist movement.

Rahmani left the country in May 2011 after rising pressure from the authorities. Their sons, Kiana and Ali, joined him in July 2015, and it is estimated they have been apart from their mother for all but six years. Mohammadi describes the longing to be with her children as an indescribable suffering.

Her refusal to be silenced in prison, from where she has sent messages via Instagram or made calls on smuggled phones, has infuriated the regime.

It is believed Mohammadi has been convicted five times, arrested 13 times and sentenced to a total of 31 years in prison. The punishments started in 2009 when


▲ Women without headscarves - a human rights flashpoint in Iran

her passport was confiscated. The following year she was arrested without a warrant and held in connection with her work with the Defenders of Human Rights Center, leading to an 11-year sentence that she began serving in April 2012. Mohammadi was released on bail on 30 July 2012 after a severe deterioration in her health. Incarceration has taken its toll. She suffers from a neurological disorder that can result in seizures, temporary partial paralysis, and a blood clot in her lung.

Her refusal to stop campaigning, including over the horrific conditions inside Evin jail in Tehran, led to her rearrest in May 2015 and a sentence of 16 years.

She was released in 2020 after serving eight years of a 10-year sentence, then was tried again in absentia six months later, and she was taken to jail in November 2021.
Patrick Wintour

Scaredy cats?
Wild animals now fear humans most
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'Fake information'
How the 15-minute city got politicised
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Spate of drug overdose deaths linked to synthetic opioids and sedatives

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

Synthetic opioids and a sedative that have killed thousands of drug users in the US may be behind dozens of fatal overdoses in the West Midlands.

About 30 deaths over two months this summer were being examined for the involvement of a heroin substitute called nitazene and the sedative xylazine, Birmingham city council's director of public health, Justin Varney, told the Guardian. Nitazenes are up to 100 times more powerful than heroin.

It is believed the drugs are being cut into or sold as heroin without users' knowledge. They have emerged in the UK after heroin supplies were hit by the Taliban's ban on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan last year.

Varney said his area normally saw six to eight drug deaths a month, making the spike in June and July double the normal rate. Police have launched a crackdown on dealers that has led to seizures and arrests. "We have seen [these drugs] globally for a while, particularly in the US," said Varney. "Over this year we have started to see them appear in the UK. There was a cluster in Birmingham, Bristol, London and Coventry."

On Tuesday the coroner for Birmingham and Solihull, James Bennett, concluded nitazenes were the primary cause of death of two people in one night in July at a hostel in the Lozells area of the city.

Clive Cooper, 38, was a long-term heroin user with schizophrenia. After he was found on his floor a neighbour said he had taken heroin. In fact he had injected nitazene. A wrap of an unused brown crystallised substance was identified as nitazene, which the pathologist said was about 20 times stronger than the opioid fentanyl.

Maria Green, 42, who had bipolar disorder, anorexia and depression, died on the same night from the same drug, Bennett found. She was discovered by a friend collapsed on her bed. She had taken heroin, cocaine and other drugs for years. The day earlier she had referred herself for help to a local charity after saying that "her life was going nowhere", the coroner's inquest heard. The cause of death was nitazene toxicity.

Romaan Hussain, the director of the hostel operator where Green and Cooper had lived, said at least three other people had died in nearby houses of multiple occupation (HMO) at about the same time, probably from the same batch. "We're on the frontline of a global issue," he said. "We require more help."

One local addict said: "It's killing people and someone has to stand up. My friends are heroin users and I don't want them dying."

Two days before the Lozells deaths Stephen Harrop, 36, died from heroin and nitazene toxity in an HMO in Balsall Heath, while on the same day six miles across the city in Handsworth, Michael Iddles, 53, was found dead at home. His death was caused by heroin and nitazene.

They were not the city's first deaths. On 7 June, James Simmons, 38, was found collapsed in an HMO in Aston. The cause of death was opioids, cocaine and nitazene toxicity. A month later Wayne Purcell died in the same property after injecting nitazene. On 1 July, Armstrong Tabrey, 27, was found in cardiac arrest in shared housing in Erdington. Varney said some addicts had become so afraid it had pushed them to seek rehab treatment.

Dr Caroline Copeland, the director of the national programme on substance abuse deaths at King's College London, said the Taliban's ban "may have done more harm than help".

"We are now faced with the emergence of synthetic opioids with extreme potencies as heroin replacements," she said. "With some of these nitazenes even a small amount is sufficient to prove fatal."

The spike in fatalities in the West Midlands appears to have subsided after a response involving public health officials, police and drug support charities. Users were warned about the risks by text message, which resulted in more cautious use. But agencies expect further peaks as international drug supplies fluctuate.

"Whether it becomes like fentanyl [which has ravaged US cities], we don't know," said Varney. "The US experience is concerning, but the UK drugs market is different. This is going to happen again, whether it is nitazenes or a new synthetic. Like any big industry, the global drug industry is looking at the next big thing."

Man charged with plot to kidnap and murder Holly Willoughby

Jamie Grierson

A 36-year-old man has appeared in court charged over an alleged plot to kidnap and murder the television presenter Holly Willoughby.

Gavin Plumb, from Harlow, Essex, is charged with soliciting a man named David Nelson to commit murder, and incitement to commit kidnap between 2 October and 5 October in Harlow, Essex.

The charges state the defendant is accused of planning to assemble a "kidnap and restraint kit" and encouraging a third party to travel to Britain to carry out the alleged offences.

Plumb appeared yesterday in the dock at Chelmsford magistrates court in a green T-shirt with the slogan "aged to perfection", speaking only to confirm his name, date of birth, address and where he worked.

The court heard Plumb is alleged to have conspired online with another man and created a "detailed plan" to carry out the offences.

The other man had been due to arrive in Britain next week from the US, the court heard.



◀ *Holly Willoughby arrives at the National Television awards last month*
PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT GARFITT/ SHUTTERSTOCK FOR NTA

Plumb, who is reported to be a security officer at a shopping precinct in Harlow, was remanded in custody by the district judge Caroline Jackson to appear for a plea hearing at Chelmsford crown court on 3 November.

The This Morning presenter, 42, pulled out of the ITV show on Thursday, and her London home is reportedly being guarded by police.

Det Supt Rob Kirby from Essex and Kent serious crime directorate said: "This was an extremely fast-paced investigation, with many of our officers and national partners working overnight to secure these charges. The safeguarding of any victim is paramount and we will continue to prioritise this, working with the Metropolitan police service as the investigation proceeds."

Plumb was arrested on Wednesday on suspicion of conspiracy to kidnap and is in custody.

Executives at This Morning were alerted to the alleged plot on Thursday morning and the presenter decided to pull out shortly before she was due to go on air. Alison Hammond replaced the 42-year-old to present the show alongside Josie Gibson, without explanation.

A spokesperson for ITV said: "This news has come as a huge shock to everyone at This Morning and ITV. We are providing all of the support we can to Holly and her family at this incredibly distressing time."

ITV is understood to be providing round-the-clock security and support for Willoughby with the police at her home, where she lives with her husband and three children.



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▼ *Calanais is free to enter, but bigger cruise ships bringing more visitors are a cause for concern* PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN



Plans to charge for access to neolithic site on Lewis raise pagan fears over right to worship



▲ *Films and TV, such as Outlander, above, have boosted Calanais as a tourist attraction* PHOTOGRAPH: REX

Severin Carrell
Scotland editor

For generations, walkers, pagans and artists have freely roamed the standing stones at Calanais on Lewis, drawn by their monumental scale, coastal views and the spiritual impact of the sun and moon rising there.

But there are growing fears that proposals by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to introduce an admissions charge, and to control access to the neolithic site for the first time, could have a significant impact on those freedoms.

Land access campaigners fear it would set a precedent for Scotland's other neolithic sites. Pagans and artists are alarmed about the potential restrictions to their rights to worship and work there.

Julian Cope, the former Teardrop Explodes singer-songwriter who has written extensively on prehistoric monuments and knows Calanais, said it was an "excruciating problem because it shouldn't be a problem".

The large cruise ships that threatened to overwhelm the site were "awesomely awful", he said. "I don't know that I have the answer other than the druids and moon worshippers and new pagans are just going to have to fight for it."

Popularised by the historical fantasy series Outlander and the Pixar movie Brave, Calanais, also known as Callanish, has become the most visited attraction in the Outer Hebrides thanks to cruise ship tours. That has already damaged the fragile site, a scheduled monument, but visitor numbers are expected to continue rising once a new deepwater port built for much larger cruise ships opens in Stornoway, the main town on Lewis, for the 2024 season.

The trust that runs Calanais visitor centre, Urras nan Tursachan (UnT), forecasts visitor numbers will nearly double to 220,000 a year by 2035 and is building a larger £6.5m facility to help it cope.

While the visitor centre already has an entry fee, the stones are free to tour. But the tourism projection have forced HES, which owns the stones, to propose a single admission fee for the site and visitors centre to help it meet its costs.

There are no details yet on how that would work, and the proposal also faces legal hurdles. Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 it is unlawful to impose an admission charge for non-motorised access to land that is currently free to cross. Calanais also has historic footpaths across it, entered via unlocked gates, giving additional rights of access.

The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, or ScotWays, said HES would either need ministerial approval for a new bylaw or Scottish parliament agreement to amend the 2003 act. Both those steps would be subject to public scrutiny.

Richard Barron, the chief operating officer of ScotWays, said many other historic sites in Scotland were experiencing visitor pressures but remained free. "HES is in danger of setting a precedent that could undermine Scotland's hard-won access rights. Is this really the only possible option?"

Philip Carr-Gomm, a former chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, said Calanais is particularly linked by pagans to the full moon, who need to visit at night throughout the year. Paying for access to a religious site was itself questionable, Carr-Gomm added.

Jill Smith, a performance artist who lives on Lewis, whose work features Calanais, said she was "really shocked" that an admissions fee was being considered.

"A lot of people like me feel that it's not just an archaeological site. It is still alive; it's connected to the earth and to the other sites," she said. "You can't cut this [place] off."

An HES spokeswoman would not be drawn on specific details about the scheme. "Proposals to deliver an enhanced visitor experience and help support conservation costs are in the early planning stages," she said.

"We will be working with UnT to engage with communities and key stakeholders when there are further developed proposals for the site."

Liverpool to bring bus network back under public control

Gwyn Topham
Transport correspondent

The Liverpool region will bring its buses back under public control, after the mayor announced he was introducing franchising to allow the authority to set routes and fares.

The decision means the Liverpool region will become the second place to overturn decades of bus deregulation in England, after Greater Manchester brought in its Bee Network two weeks ago.

The metro mayor, Steve Rotheram, said the move "marked the start of a new era for public transport" in the region, adding: "For too long, our residents have been forced to contend with a second-class service that places profit before passengers and leaves behind the very people who need it most."

Under franchising, he said the region would "have greater control over fares, tickets and routes to ensure that bus services are run in the best interests of passengers".

Rotheram said the move would be "transformational" but the change would not happen overnight, with several stages to go before Liverpool could introduce the system.

The plans should pave the way for more London-style integrated public transport, featuring contactless ticketing and capped fares across the city region's buses and trains.

Buses in Merseyside have been widely seen as unreliable and expensive, according to consultations with passengers. About 15% of the services in the region have been deemed commercially unviable by operators and rely on local authority subsidy to run, costing around £14m a year.

Matthew Topham, a campaigner at the Better Buses passenger group, said: "Merseyside has been the victim of 37 years of Thatcherite failure. A network run in the interests of shareholders, often based overseas, would never deliver for the public.

"Steve Rotheram is joining [Greater Manchester mayor] Andy Burnham by putting the region back in the fast lane."

Buses in Britain outside London were privatised and deregulated in 1986. Legislation passed in 2017 gave powers to mayors to introduce franchising, though the process has proved difficult.



▲ *A bus passes through Liverpool. The region's system is to be regulated*

Labour builds on historic byelection victory with affordable homes pledge

Continued *from page 1*

affordable housing for a generation. If we don't crack the nut now then the situation is only going to get worse."

In a byelection result described by the Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, as "seismic", Michael Shanks beat his closest rival, the SNP's Katy Loudon, by 17,845 votes to 8,399, a majority of 9,446.

"Scottish politics has fundamentally changed," said Sarwar, adding that voters were sending "a very clear message that they are sick of two tired, failing, incompetent governments".

Labour strategists said the result showed that 28 Scottish Westminster constituencies were within the party's grasp. A very significant majority of those seats are held by SNP MPs.

Scotland's first minister, Humza Yousaf, admitted the SNP had endured a "tough night" and faced calls for a rethink of his controversial proposal to pitch the next election in Scotland as a de facto referendum on independence.

His critics said the result, in which the SNP's support fell by 15,000 votes compared with the 2019 general election, was clear evidence voters were far more concerned with the cost of living crisis. Yousaf said "the buck does absolutely stop with me" but denied he had to dramatically change his independence strategy. "We have to talk about what independence means to people in their everyday lives," he added - but conceded the party's message on the economic crisis had to be "crisper and clearer".

One senior MP said: "The worst lesson to take from Rutherglen is that we need to push independence harder. The party needs to get real and get back into listening mode."

Sarwar told BBC Breakfast yesterday that his party was "targeting significant gains" at the next general election. "I'm very clear that Scotland will lead the way in delivering a UK-wide Labour government," he said.

"What you've seen happen in Scotland overnight is people move away and reject the politics of division, of chaos and incompetence, and instead express a desire for the fresh start, express a desire for change. They can now see that Scottish Labour is the vehicle for that change."

Starmer told reporters: "I have always said winning back the trust of people in Scotland is essential. Tonight's victory is the culmination of three-and-a-half years of hard work and humility on that journey."

Yousaf said the scale of the rout was largely caused by the justified anger of voters towards Margaret Ferrier, the former SNP MP who travelled to London and visited local shops while suspecting she had Covid, and the wholesale switch of Tory voters to Labour. The police investigation into the SNP's finances also came up on the doorstep, he said.

"The buck does absolutely stop me, but I think everybody knows this particular byelection had some very difficult contextual factors around it," he says. "I can't get away from the fact that our voters did not come out."

Stephen Flynn, the SNP's Westminster leader, said the party needed an urgent postmortem into why it had lost so comprehensively, and admitted on BBC Radio Scotland that some SNP voters had switched sides.

He said the party needed to respond better to the cost of living crisis - the overarching issue in the byelection. "I don't think you need to do any focus groups to realise that people are skint," he said.

Those proposals will be the focus of an intensive debate at the SNP's conference, which begins in Aberdeen on 15 October, where supporters of Yousaf's leadership rival Kate Forbes are expected to step up their efforts to force a change of direction.

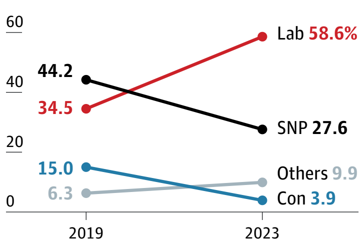
One senior figure said the party had to show it was listening to voters' concerns. There were anxieties, he said, that the SNP was out of touch and being distracted by hardcore independence activists.

Another pointed to an amendment backed by prominent MPs including Tommy Sheppard, Alyn Smith and Philippa Whitford, that the next election should be fought on a gradualist platform of further devolution of powers on employment rights, green energy and migration.



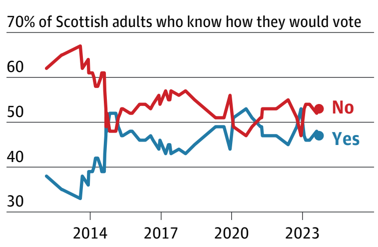
▲ *The SNP's candidate for Rutherglen, Katy Loudon, on the campaign trail before her party's disastrous result* PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection result
Percentage share of vote



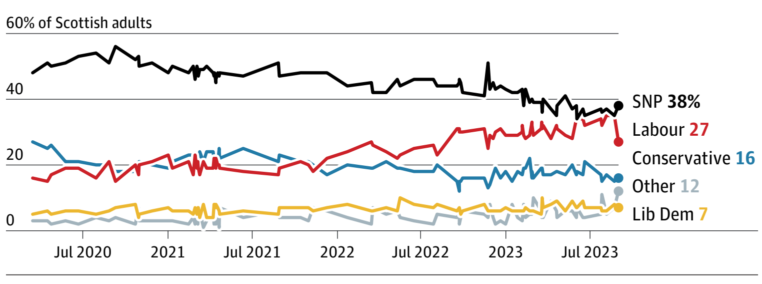
Source: PA

Support for Scottish independence
Should Scotland be an independent country?



Source: YouGov

Westminster voting intention in Scotland
How would you be likely to vote in a UK general election?



Source: Scottish Centre for Social Research. Note: 87 polls conducted by Panelbase, YouGov, Survation, JL Partners, Opinium, BMG Research, Ipsos, Savanta, Redfield & Wilton



A 20% swing

What this means for Labour and a general election

Rowena Mason
Severin Carrell

Labour went big on the earthquake metaphors after winning the Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection with a 20% swing. It no doubt felt seismic and earth-shattering after the party's troubles in Scotland and the seemingly unbreakable dominance of the Scottish National party.

Rutherglen and Hamilton West is a single seat on the outskirts of Glasgow - one that has swung repeatedly between Labour and SNP for the last 10 years. But its return to Labour was a sign the party has renewed vigour under Anas Sarwar, who appears to be picking up switchers from SNP, Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters. It puts other three-way marginals in play for Labour, and suggests the party could be on course to hoover up many centre ground votes at an election.

Labour won in Rutherglen with a crushing 58.6% vote share by shifting rightwards, moving much closer to the political centre in Scotland. The party attacked the SNP for letting councils raise council tax rates, for a congestion charge mooted by SNP councillors to enter nearby Glasgow, and for suggestions income tax might go up again. But what Starmer's election strategists will be looking at now is whether a revival of the party's fortunes in Scotland is enough to propel him into No 10 with a decent working majority.

John Curtice, the University of Strathclyde elections expert, said a uniform swing on this scale could lead to Labour winning 42

▼ *Election strategists will be looking to see if a Labour revival in Scotland can propel Keir Starmer into No 10*

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN



Greens Party open to a deal with Labour, co-leaders say

Peter Walker
Deputy political editor

The Green party plans to put as many resources as possible into four potentially winnable seats at the next general election, and would be open to doing a deal with Labour if needed, the party's co-leaders said at the start of their conference yesterday.

After a joint speech in Brighton, where they accused the government of "playing cynical political games" with the climate crisis, Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay told the Guardian that the party hoped to exercise influence beyond its size and funding.

With a base of activists massively increased since 2019 and a subsequent quadrupling of councillors, the Greens in England and Wales hope to replicate the intense targeting that helped them win the Brighton Pavilion seat in 2010.

Denyer told the Guardian the party would be "laser-focused on those four target constituencies" - Brighton Pavilion; Denyer in the newly created seat of Bristol Central; Ramsay in Waveney Valley, another new seat, across parts of Norfolk and Suffolk; and Ellie Chowns in North Herefordshire.

Chowns and Siân Berry, who is hoping to succeed Caroline Lucas in Brighton, joined the co-leaders on stage after their speech.

While a tally of four is ambitious, with some psephologists saying the party would do well even to hold the Brighton seat, the aim is to be influential in parliament, especially if Labour falls short of a majority.

A Green group of MPs would be open to some sort of post-election deal with Labour, Denyer said: "We've always been really clear that we're happy to work with other parties in areas where we agree, which is what Greens do all over the world.

"Labour are not emitting very collaborative noises at the moment, but we have continued to be clear that our door is open and if Labour are in a position where they have the opportunity to form a government but don't have enough seats on their own, then we will definitely be open to having conversations with them. But we wouldn't just be sort of rolling over and doing what they say."

The three-day conference, likely to be the last before an election next year, is intended to put across a disciplined and focused message to voters, and to enthuse members to commit time and effort to campaigning.

While Denyer's Bristol seat mirrors the type of urban demographic that found success in Brighton, recent local election wins in rural areas have boosted hopes for fights such as Ramsay's, in a new constituency where so far he is the only declared candidate.

Unveiling a policy platform including a pledge for tenants to be able to force landlords to properly insulate their homes, the co-leaders' speech saw them also attack Labour, with a charge that under Keir Starmer it has become so timid it is a "bystander to the Conservatives' chaos".

"No matter what new climate crime or damaging policy the government comes up with, Labour somehow manages to disappoint us just as much," Ramsay said. "Time after time, they come out swinging at the Conservatives, and then when asked: 'Does that mean you'll reverse these decisions if you make it into government?' - radio silence."

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out of Scotland's 59 seats. This could see Starmer win Westminster comfortably. But he injected a note of caution that there was still "uncertain" support for him. There are also the usual caveats that lower turnout of about 40% means it is difficult to draw wider conclusions - and Rutherglen had its own circumstances of being an election to replace an SNP politician, Margaret Ferrier, who was being booted out for flouting Covid rules.

Labour insiders are similarly cautious on whether the party will sweep to victory across Scotland, from a base of just two MPs. They are optimistic of winning just over half of Scotland's 59 seats, but north of 40 seems a tall order.

Labour strategists, however, are taking hope from the feeling that their party is not a toxic brand in Scotland any more - as it was in the post-referendum "tsunami" of 2015 when the party got crushed between independence backers opting for the SNP and unionists edging towards the Tories.

Analysis by the Scottish Election Study found Labour's reputation in Scotland has changed. It is now the least disliked party, attracting voters from the other big parties. The SNP's falling fortunes after Nicola Sturgeon's departure are another factor in voters turning to Labour. The party could not have hoped for a bigger boost heading into its conference in Liverpool.



◀ *Keir Starmer hails the victory of Michael Shanks, right, in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection*

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY

'Skelped' What this means for SNP

Libby Brooks
Severin Carrell

Not even the most sanguine of SNP stalwarts anticipated a win in Rutherglen and Hamilton West, but the scale of the defeat in the long-awaited byelection - "skelped", as one prominent MP puts it - was bracing.

It is prompting soul-searching in the party and an immediate pushback on the plan of the SNP leader, Humza Yousaf, to put independence front and centre during the next general election.

Yousaf, who began this week gracing the cover of Time magazine as a "trailblazer shaping the future", has ended it with the clock apparently ticking on his new independence strategy, with senior figures asserting the need for a more gradualist approach, to reflect voters' immediate concerns.

Stephen Flynn, the SNP's Westminster leader, said the party needed an urgent postmortem to investigate why it had lost so comprehensively and had to respond better to the cost of living crisis - the overarching issue in the byelection. "I don't think you need to do any focus groups to realise people are skint," he told the BBC.

If the SNP downgrades its independence push, it would affect the dynamics of Scottish politics. It suits Labour for the SNP to focus on the constitution, while Scottish Conservatives need independence to be front and centre to galvanise the party's unionist base.

This need for a recalibration is sharpened with the arrival of the SNP conference in a week's time, when Yousaf will ask members to ratify his plan: to put independence in the first line of a general election manifesto, claiming that if the SNP wins a majority of seats it would be a mandate to open independence talks with Westminster.

> ***'You don't need focus groups to realise people are skint'***
>
> **Stephen Flynn**
> *SNP Westminster leader*

There are already significant internal concerns about the clarity of his plan and doubts about how well it will sell on the doorstep; activists are weary of endless re-wordings of the same promises rendered undeliverable by Westminster's continuing refusal to grant Holyrood the powers to hold the necessary referendum.

The first full debate of independence strategy on the conference floor for years was always likely to highlight divisions, with leadership critics such as Joanna Cherry and Pete Wishart proposing amendments. But now other voices are urging Yousaf to pull back on independence.

Whatever he decides on independence strategy, Yousaf must use next week's gathering in Aberdeen to energise his deflated membership. One Westminster group source suggests that conference is the ideal opportunity to reinvigorate the membership - "and the best way to do that is by having a tangible debate on independence, which we've been shying away from for far too long".

▼*Angela Rayner says Labour will reverse the fall in affordable homes and protect renters* PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN



Rayner plans big boost to affordable housing by getting tough on builders

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

The next Labour government will oversee the biggest boost in affordable housing in a generation by getting tough on developers and tightening planning rules, said the party's deputy leader.

Angela Rayner, also the shadow housing secretary, said she wants to "increase, not decrease" the number of affordable new homes built every year, after a fall of 12% last year.

The Conservatives' overall national housing target of 300,000 a year - which they have failed to hit - should be the "benchmark" of what a Labour government would deliver, she said, adding that she wanted to exceed that number.

Housing will be one of the key battlegrounds before the election, which is expected next autumn, after Rishi Sunak failed to mention it once in his speech to Tory party conference in Manchester last week.

Housebuilding in England is due to fall to its lowest level since the second world war because of a range of government policies that threaten to dramatically slow development.

The government has been mired in rows over reforming laws that protect the 10 million British people who own their homes in a leasehold and millions more who rent, as well as over nutrient neutrality rules that prevent pollution from developments.

In an interview with the Guardian before Labour's annual party conference in Liverpool, Rayner said: "Sunak has given up. He didn't push back on his backbenchers on planning reform which he knows was needed.

"Michael Gove has had to give billions of pounds back to the Treasury because he's not been able to get the affordable homes plan working. They've decided that it's in the 'too hard' box for them to do anything about it. Everyone is paying for it."

She added: "The whole housing market has been destroyed because we've had three decades of nowhere near enough social house building. Labour will ensure we deliver the biggest boost to affordable housing for a generation.

"If we don't crack the nut now then the situation is only going to get worse."

Under Labour's plans, the party would prevent developers from "wriggling out" of their affordable housing obligations, known as section 106 rules, by setting up a new expert unit to give councils and housing associations advice to get the best deal during negotiations with property firms.

They would publish new guidance to prevent developers claiming that building more affordable homes was not viable, only permitting them to challenge 106s where there were genuine barriers to constructing homes.

"We would expect to be pushing for more but obviously it depends on the development. But developers can't get off the hook, they will still make money but we'll be supporting local authorities to push for enough affordable housing. I would want to see that number increasing, not decreasing," she said.

Rayner said she was "not closing the door" on any option to increase the amount of affordable housing - buying up new stock, building new social homes and making it easier for councils to use receipts from right-to-buy sales, after significant discounts left them without funding to replace the homes.

After Gove's levelling up department handed back £1.9bn - including £255m meant to fund new affordable housing in 2022-23 - because it struggled to find projects to spend it on - Rayner said Labour would "unlock" government grants so more could be delivered. They would do this by allowing councils and housing associations to use a greater proportion of the grant funds they receive - currently capped at just 10% - on buying housing stock which they would then rent out as affordable homes.

"We deliberately haven't put a figure on it, but there is a number of levers we can pull to push that up. I would want to see a significant increase on the 10% that we've got currently."

A leasehold reform bill would be in Labour's first king's speech - if the Tories fail to deliver one of their own next month - after the government dropped plans to abolish the "feudal" system of leaseholds across England and Wales in May.

Labour plans to adopt Law Commission proposals including making it easier for leaseholders to buy the freehold or extend their lease.

"At the moment people are being completely ripped off and they feel that. The balance isn't correct," Rayner said.

After the government flagship renters' reform bill, which would end "no-fault" evictions in England, was again put on ice, Rayner said that if the Tories failed to get legislation onto the statute book, a Labour government would. "Renters feel like they've been fleeced and they've got no recourse, no protection," she said. "The government keeps saying it's going to do something about it, but they've not. It's leaving people completely insecure."

The House of Lords, led by Labour peers, last month voted down government attempts to relax river pollution regulations to promote housebuilding. Gove wants to bring forward a new bill to scrap the so-called nutrient neutrality rules.

Rayner rejected Tory claims that Labour was against housebuilding, saying that there was a "third way" through the problem.

"They want people to believe that it is the environment or it's the houses. It's just not true. There's other ways of doing it," she said.

Labour has proposed setting up a scheme to make sure developers properly mitigate nutrients - work which they say is currently too expensive - so that building work can go ahead at the same time.

'I love campaigns; being on the road is like playtime'

As the party prepares for an election campaign before the end of next year, Rayner is likely to be one of its most high-profile campaigners thanks to her ability to resonate with voters others struggle to reach.

"I love general election campaigns," she told the Guardian on the eve of Labour's conference in Liverpool. "Parliament is school to me, that's where you need to do your revision and your homework, whereas being on the road for me is like playtime."

Rayner, with her broad Stockport accent and brightly coloured suits, is one of parliament's most recognisable and outspoken figures. But it is her upbringing that distinguishes her most from other MPs. Rayner became a mother and left school at 16. "People have an unconscious bias about you," she said. "So I often get: 'She's thick as mince,' because people think: 'Had a baby at 16, left school without qualifications'. There's connotations that some people think hold you back, but I've always seen it as an asset."

She was elected deputy leader in 2020, but her decision to back the Corbynite Rebecca Long-Bailey instead of Starmer in the leadership election has earned her suspicion from some in the leader's office.

"Both Keir and Angela come from humble backgrounds," said one shadow cabinet member. "But where Keir learned to deal with his difficulties by distancing himself from emotion, Angela became a very sensitive person who is quick to anger."

The portrait contrasts with Starmer's more buttoned-up public persona, but she said they have come to appreciate each other's different styles. "We've just grown as a couple," she said, laughing. "It's like any relationship. You just learn each other's ways."

A more important factor in her political revival is her growing popularity with voters, especially northern Tories, making her a powerful weapon in the "red wall".

Inevitable comparisons are now being drawn between Rayner and John Prescott, Tony Blair's blunt-speaking deputy from Yorkshire who provided a link between the centrist Blair and the more leftwing party faithful. Rayner said: "I'm probably more of a Barbara Castle, because she's fiery and female."

Kiran Stacey and Pippa Crerar

Political exposure

The Downing Street photographer who snaps up the scoops

Alexandra Topping

There is a framed notice in the hallway of 10 Downing Street. It carries the message: "Please remember. You may be photographed. Please cover any documents you may be holding."

It is not a warning - as many prime ministers have come to rue - always heeded. The latest victim was Rishi Sunak, whose government was left scrabbling after a secret document, suggesting phase 2 of HS2 was in danger of being scrapped, was photographed under the arm of a government official.

The man who took it, Steve Back - aka Political Pictures - has form. For more than a decade he has broken numerous stories, thanks to patience, journalistic nous and a decent camera lens.

"It's just old-fashioned journalism," he said. "I've told them umpteen times to tell people to cover up documents. But no one seems to take any notice."

Back has no shortage of scalps. The 69-year-old forced the resignation of Britain's most senior counterterrorism officer after picturing him with top secret documents; exposed that David Cameron's government was considering selling off Channel 4; and revealed that Theresa May's government's model for leaving the EU was: "Have cake and eat it."

The secret is having a nose for a story, he said. "If you see a piece of paper flapping around in the wind being carried with someone who's the head civil servant at the Treasury, you know it's not the time to buy a cup of tea. Especially if you get a document that says 'Confidential'. That always gets me going."

The HS2 photograph that has left the government on the ropes in recent weeks was actually taken after Back had knocked off for the day, but on his way to the tube he spotted officials leaving the back of No 10.

Sunak can hardly complain, however, having been caught by Back himself in 2020, when as chancellor he inadvertently revealed his tax plans.

Back's love affair with photography started when his parents bought him a camera for his 13th birthday. As a child with dyslexia he was treated as "thick" at school, and the camera changed his life. "It was something I was good at and people liked the results," he said. "I was not used to praise."

In 1970 he started work as an assistant and bag carrier for photographers in Covent Garden, London, before getting a staff job at the Daily Mail which, among other adventures, involved a short stint in a Ugandan jail.

"[The job] was a huge drug," he said. "You get a phone call in the middle of the night and next thing you'd be at Heathrow covering a war or following Diana to the Virgin Islands. In the first Gulf war, they said I'd be away for a week - I was away for six and a half months."

In 2001 he was badly injured in a helicopter accident in Iran. He said the Mail was "brilliant", but after several stints in hospital he could no longer do the job he loved. He went to art college and slowly started doing freelance jobs. "Then I hit on the idea of politics as no one was really covering it much at the time and I wanted to be my own boss."

A favourite moment was when he captured Peter Mandelson, then Gordon Brown's business secretary, who thought he had outwitted the photographer. "He had these papers deliberately showing me what he was doing [but] as he was getting in his car smiling, going, 'Ha ha, I got you on this one', the wind blew through all the stuff that he didn't want me to see." The next day's headline? "Lord Mandelson gives tantalising glimpse of Tory attack plans"

Other stories simply come from unguarded moments, such as when a picture of the prime minister's wife, Akshata Murty, revealed that she had worn a £570 pair of slippers for the school run. "People go mad over that," he said.



▲ Peter Mandelson tried and failed to outwit the freelance photographer



▼ *Akshata Murthy returns to the back exit of No 10 after wearing a £570 pair of slippers for the school run* PHOTOGRAPHS: STEVE BACK





▲ *Back's photos include the names of terror suspects - since redacted - and a secretary of state's briefing notes about other countries*

▼ *Steve Back runs Political Pictures and is always on the lookout for politicians revealing confidential paperwork*



Back has nearly 30,000 followers on X, formerly Twitter, where he posts as @PoliticalPics. Most people, he thinks, come for updates about Larry the Cat. But although his stories have often dominated the news, standing in the press pen outside Downing Street day after day is not a lucrative career, he said.

"There is no money in it, there really isn't," he said, adding that he was paid £50 for uncovering the scrapping of HS2. Despite that, Downing Street shouldn't start looking forward to the day when he might hang up his Nikon. "I've been in photography for 53 years, and I love it," he said. "As long as I wake up every morning and still know who I am, I'll keep going."

Rishi Sunak

'Don't join the bullies,' warns Belgian trans deputy PM

Ashifa Kassam *European community affairs correspondent*

Belgium's deputy prime minister, who ranks as one of Europe's most senior transgender politicians, has urged Rishi Sunak not to join "the real bullies" after remarks made by the British prime minister at the Conservative party conference this week.

Sunak told the audience, to cheers and loud applause: "We shouldn't get bullied into believing that people can be any sex they want to be. They can't. A man is a man and a woman is a woman. That's just common sense."

His comments came as it was revealed that the number of hate crimes against transgender people last year in England and Wales had climbed to a record high, with the Home Office suggesting in its report that the 11% rise may have been prompted by comments by politicians and media.

On Thursday, Petra De Sutter, Europe's first openly transgender minister, described Sunak's comments as "hurtful and very disappointing" on social media.

"These words are fuelling transphobia and are endangering the lives of many people around the world," she said. "Trans women are women. And in no way a threat to others. Don't join the real bullies, Rishi Sunak."

De Sutter, a doctor and gynaecology professor, was sworn in as deputy prime minister in Belgium in 2020.

Sunak's comments were widely seen as an attempt by the prime minister - whose party is trailing 20 points in polls - to further exploit culture war issues.

At the Tory party conference in Manchester, Suella Braverman took aim at so-called "gender ideology", in a speech during which a prominent Conservative was ejected from the premises after he accused the home secretary of homophobia and transphobia, saying there was "no such thing as gender ideology".

Andrew Boff, who is gay and served as the leader of the Tories in London's City Hall, later told the Press Association that Braverman "was basically vilifying gay people and trans people by this attack on LGBT ideology or gender ideology".

Attenders at the conference also heard from the health secretary, Steve Barclay, who promised to ban transgender hospital patients in England from being treated in female- and male-only wards. His comments were criticised by moderate Tory MPs, amid concerns that LGBTQ+ people are being targeted as the party attempts to appeal to those on its right flank.

"I hope to see him solve problems which actually exist," said Jamie Wallis, a Conservative who became the first openly transgender MP last year.

Scientists find evidence people suffer 'long colds'

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Scientists say they have found evidence that people may experience "long colds", acute respiratory infections with long-term symptoms.

Some of the most common symptoms include coughing, stomach pain and diarrhoea more than four weeks after the initial infection. The severity of an illness appears to be a key driver of the risk of long-term symptoms.

The study, led by Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), was published in the Lancet's EClinicalMedicine journal. The findings suggest there may be long-lasting health impacts after non-Covid acute respiratory infections such as colds, influenza or pneumonia, that have been going unrecognised.

However, the researchers do not yet have evidence suggesting that the symptoms have the same severity or duration as long Covid Prof Adrian Martineau, a clinical professor of respiratory infection and immunity at QMUL, said: "Our findings may chime with the experience of people who have struggled with prolonged symptoms after having a respiratory infection despite testing negative for Covid-19.

"Research into the long-term effects of Covid-19 and other acute respiratory infections is important because it can help us to get to the root of why some people experience more prolonged symptoms than others. Ultimately this could help us to identify the most appropriate form of treatment for affected people."

Researchers found that people experience long colds after respiratory infections that test negative for Covid-19. Experts looked at data from 10,203 people taking part in the Covidence UK study into coronavirus.

Dr David Strain of the University of Exeter, who was not involved in the study, said it "demonstrated, at least in the short term, persistence of symptoms can be troubling not just after Covid-19 but after many other infections".



▲ *Coughing, stomach pains and diarrhoea can occur more than four weeks after the cold infection starts*
PHOTOGRAPH: TERO VESALAINEN/ALAMY

Pandemic will affect children for two decades, inquiry told

Amelia Hill

Children will live in the "long shadow" of the pandemic for the next two decades thanks to the government, the former children's commissioner has told the Covid inquiry.

The "devastating impact" the pandemic had on children's mental and physical health long term was compounded by government policies that had left millions of families struggling to survive, the inquiry heard.

It was, said Anne Longfield, who was the children's commissioner for England until February 2021, a "toxic mix" that should have flagged lockdown as an "obvious" risk to anyone familiar with the wide research done into the lives of children in England and Wales before the pandemic.

> ***'No one was taking responsibility for children's interests'***
>
> **Anne Longfield** *Former children's commissioner*

She said: "There was clear concern, pre-pandemic, about child health, rising inequalities in infant mortality, rising inequalities in life expectancy - with life expectancy going backwards, particularly for women in disadvantaged areas."

She added: "These all occurred at the same time as rising levels of child poverty across the UK and also cuts to services supporting the most vulnerable." Longfield gave evidence that 2.3 million children - one in six - lived in vulnerable homes before the pandemic. During lockdown, she said, this meant these children were "essentially locked up in homes in unsafe environments".

The government should also have been aware that least 1.8 million children did not have digital devices for online learning, and that young persons living in the lowest income quintile were twice as likely to have a mental health diagnosis as those living in the high income quintile.

Longfield said she tried repeatedly to talk to the government about the impact their pandemic policies were having on children. "It was very clear that there was no one at the cabinet table who was taking responsibility for children's best interests," she said.



Miscarriage of justice body to review Michael Stone case

Daniel Boffey
Chief reporter

The conviction of Michael Stone, who has served 26 years in prison for the murders of Lin Russell and her daughter Megan, is being reviewed by the Criminal Cases Review Commission after a confession by the serial killer Levi Bellfield.

In a reversal of a decision made three months ago, in which the CCRC had said there was no realistic prospect of Stone's conviction being overturned at the court of appeal, the body responsible for investigating alleged miscarriages of justice has said it will begin a fresh review.

The move came in response to a "pre-action" letter by Stone's lawyers warning that they would take the CCRC to a judicial review over its disregard of Bellfield's multiple confessions in recent years to the murders and the commission's failure to order new forensic tests on DNA strands found at the crime scene.

The CCRC has told Stone's lawyers that it is "prepared to look at the points raised" and any "additional submissions" as part of a review of the killing in 1996 of Russell, 45, Megan, five, and the attempted murder of Russell's eldest child, Josie, then nine, with a hammer.

Stone's conviction had rested almost entirely on his alleged cell confession to Damien Daley, a criminal on remand who was in a segregation cell in Canterbury prison. He claimed that Stone told him through a heating pipe that went between their cells that he had attacked Russell and her children.

Stone, 63, has insisted throughout he made no such admissions, and in 2017 and 2019 Bellfield, 55, confessed to, respectively, a fellow prisoner and Stone's lawyers that he had been responsible for the murders.

Bellfield is serving three life sentences for the murder of Marsha McDonnell, 19, and Amélie Delagrange, 22, and the attempted murder of Kate Sheedy when she


▲ *Lin and Megan Russell, seen with Josie, centre, were murdered in 1996.*

was 18. He has also admitted to the rape and murder of 13-year-old Milly Dowler. This year, Bellfield confessed to the murder of Elizabeth Chau, a 19-year-old Vietnamese national studying in London, who was abducted in April 1999 from Ealing, west London.

Mark McDonald, the barrister who has represented Stone for two decades, said: "Michael Stone has been in prison for 26 years for a crime he did not commit. I am really pleased the CCRC have decided to review this case again. I first put my application in to the CCRC in 2017 after another man admitted he carried out the crime that Stone is in prison for. It took six years to make a decision … The decision as to whether Bellfield is credible needs to be taken by the court of appeal, not the CCRC."

On 9 July 1996, Russell, Megan, Josie, and the family dog, Lucy, were returning home from Goodnestone school near Chillenden in Kent when they were approached on a country lane by a man. He tied them up before attacking them with a hammer. Russell and Megan were killed and Josie was left critically injured.

There was no forensic evidence linking Stone to the murder, nor witnesses. His initial conviction was overturned in 2001 after another prisoner who had claimed during the trial to have heard Stone confess to the crimes subsequently admitted to the Daily Mirror that he had been telling the jury "a pack of lies".

Stone was convicted at retrial after the jury believed Daley's separate account of an incriminating conversation with Stone despite the prosecution's admission there was nothing that he had said he could not have picked up from the newspapers.

In its decision in July this year not to refer Stone's case to the court of appeal, the CCRC said there were discrepancies between Bellfield's account of the murder and the facts of the case.

High cost of mortgages drives fastest house price fall in 14 years

Mark Sweney

UK house prices fell at the fastest annual rate in 14 years in September, as high mortgage costs fuelled a sixth consecutive monthly drop in a "buyer's market", according to Halifax.

Britain's biggest mortgage lender said prices fell by 4.7% in September, the biggest year-on-year drop since 2009. The average price of a typical UK home fell to £278,601, down from £292,197 in the same month last year.

Halifax said higher mortgage costs were likely to affect prices into next year. House prices fell 0.4% month-on-month in September, the sixth fall in a row, though this was less than the 1.8% drop in prices in August.

"Activity levels continue to look subdued compared with recent years," said Kim Kinnaird, the director of Halifax Mortgages. "Borrowing costs are the primary factor, given the impact of higher interest rates on mortgage affordability. Against this backdrop homeowners inevitably become more realistic about their target selling price, reflecting what has become a buyer's market."

Figures published last month showed that UK mortgage approvals fell in August to their lowest level in six months as high interest rates cooled the housing market.

The Bank of England said net mortgage approvals for house purchases fell from 49,500 in July to 45,400 in August and were down by a third from the same month last year.

Last month, the Bank kept interest rates on hold for the first time in almost two years, ending a run of 14 consecutive increases and raising the prospect that a peak in borrowing costs had been reached.

"With the base rate now likely to be at or around its peak, we are seeing fixed rate mortgage deals ease back from recent highs," Kinnaird said.

She warned that the base rate was likely to remain high until inflation got back to its 2% target: "Overall, these factors are likely to keep mortgage rates elevated in comparison with recent years, constraining buyer demand and putting downward pressure on house prices into next year."

An Office for National Statistics survey found 40% of people were struggling to afford their rent or mortgage payments, up from 30% at the same time last year.

Despite the fall in house prices, Halifax said the average home was worth almost £40,000 more than in March 2020, when lockdowns began.

4.7%
Year-on-year drop in house prices in September after six monthly falls in a row, according to Halifax

Michelin Guide launches key ratings to mark the best hotels in the world

Kim Willsher



The Michelin Guide, the red gastronomic bible that awards stars to the best restaurants, is to begin rating hotels using key symbols.

Guide editors say they want to create a "trusted reference" to help travellers navigate the large and varied offers of accommodation on the internet by flagging "establishments offering exceptional hotel and travel experiences".

The new benchmark will be introduced next year and will award keys to more than 5,300 hotels in 120 countries based on five criteria, including whether the hotel gives visitors a "local experience" as well as its design and architecture. The hotels have all been rated by independent "mystery" Michelin inspectors, all former travel professionals, of 25 different nationalities and a range of ages. The key awards will also take into consideration customer reviews.

The original Michelin Guide was launched in France in 1900 by brothers André and Édouard Michelin - founders of the tyre company of the same name - to dispense local dining advice at a time when there were fewer than 3,000 cars on French roads. To help motorists plan trips, boosting car and tyre sales, it was filled with maps, tips on changing tyres, where to get petrol and a good meal as well as how to find a mechanic in case of breakdowns.

Early editions were, as the red cover stated, "offered graciously to drivers" for free, but it began charging in 1920 and launched its coveted one- to three-star rankings in 1931.

In recent years, the red book has been largely replaced by a website that now has 47 million visitors a year and an additional six million subscribers on social media.

Announcing the new "key" awards on Thursday, Gwendal Poullennec, head of the guide, said it "was created to give travellers the keys to discovery and help them make the right choices at a time when there was a lack of such information".

The Michelin Guide has been at the centre of a number of controversies, with some chefs left wondering why they have lost stars and others refusing to claim them, saying it puts too much pressure on them to live up to expectations. In the past, there were allegations of snobbery and accusations of bias towards French restaurants. In recent years some French and American chefs have complained that the guide favoured UK establishments.


▲ *A likely key contender: the luxury Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris and, left, its Palm Court*

PHOTOGRAPHS: BRUNO DE HOGUES/GETTY; ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL/ALAMY

Holocaust

Film brings to life Paris family's dark story

Nadia Khomami
Arts and culture correspondent







▲ *A still from the virtual reality documentary Letters from Drancy. Left, Marion Deichmann with her mother, and right, with her mother and grandmother*
PHOTOGRAPH: EAST CITY FILMS

Marion Deichmann was nine years old when her mother was arrested in the Vél' d'Hiv roundup in Paris and sent to a Nazi concentration camp.

"Two militia came to our little apartment and said, 'We've come to collect Alice Deichmann'," Marion, now 91, recalls. "We knew that there were working camps, but nobody knew then about the 'final solution' - the plan to exterminate Jews in a gas chamber. So my mother was taken. I remember the last thing she said to me was, 'Be good. I'll be back'."

Alice was sent to the Drancy transit camp on the outskirts of Paris, and it was only decades later that Deichmann received confirmation her mother had been taken to Auschwitz and murdered.

For years, Deichmann struggled to discuss her experiences of the Holocaust. But now she has worked closely with the director Darren Emerson on Letters from Drancy, a virtual-reality documentary that brings her story to life.

"I was born in Karlsruhe, Germany in November 1932, six weeks before Hitler's appointment as chancellor," she says. "And as you know, the Jews had to leave because of the racial laws."

Deichmann was 16 months old when her family moved to Luxembourg after her father lost his job. When her parents separated, her father escaped to Brazil, while she and her mother remained. By the time Alice decided emigration was necessary, it was too late to leave Europe.

The pair managed to get to Brussels, where they found a truck driver to sneak them across the border into France, eventually joining Alice's mother in Paris.

"[In Paris] the Nazis had all kinds of procedures," Deichmann recalls. "You had to put down your name if you wanted to work, but it was only to better able [them] to take you in. There was no escape."

She added: "It was only when the French saw six-year-old children wearing the yellow star and being picked up that the tide turned and many people went into the resistance."

After her mother's arrest, the French resistance came to relocate Deichmann and she went into hiding, as did her grandmother. She stayed in different homes until a social worker connected her with the Parigny family in Normandy, who took her in as their own.

When the war ended, and Deichmann returned to Paris to be reunited with her grandmother and uncle, the family began the work of trying to find Alice. "For a long, long time I still hoped she'd be alive," Deichmann says.

Eventually, that hope gave way to an unimaginable reality: "Immediately on arrival [at Auschwitz], she went to the gas chamber.

"I learned that in 1982, when I was in my 50s. Nobody could say exactly, because there were no survivors. But I learned through lawyers who did research that my mother went to Auschwitz on 27 July 1942. She was on convoy number 12. Her name was not on the list of those who came out."

Though she continued with her life after the war - emigrating to the US, marrying and having children before returning to France - Deichmann says she has never been able to fully say goodbye to her mother.

"Gone, really? She just walked out the door. All human societies have rituals, funerals to say goodbye. I have not had that."

Letters from Drancy had its UK premiere at the BFI London film festival last night. Revisiting sites of trauma for the film, including the apartment where her mother was taken, was "terrible", she says But she is also elated her story was chosen for this film. In recent years she has been chronicling her experiences, in her 2012 book, Her Name Shall Remain Unforgotten, and her regular visits to schools.

"I don't want my mother's story to die. My crusade is to make sure we all remember, so this won't happen ever again."

Letters from Drancy is at the Bargehouse, Oxo Tower, London until 22 October. Marion Deichmann and Darren Emerson are also giving a talk tomorrow at 3pm

True heroes…



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Leading man: DiCaprio in The Great Gatsby, 2013

DiCaprio's star status lands him role of his life – climate crisis activist



Andrew Pulver

It is a film industry truism that the movie star is dead, but Leonardo DiCaprio's career may be evidence that there is still life in the concept. Since he became a bona fide lead actor in the late 1990s, DiCaprio's films have earned more than $7bn (£5.7bn), with the actor himself regularly receiving more than $20m a movie; he works with the industry's most heavyweight directors; and he has used his celebrity clout to become a high-profile activist, notably in the fields of the climate crisis and Indigenous rights.

DiCaprio's new film, Martin Scorsese's Killers of the Flower Moon, appears to be in perfect alignment with all these. DiCaprio, 48, reportedly received $30m to appear, one of the heftiest fees of his career, putting him near the top of the Hollywood fees ladder. Scorsese, of course, is arguably the most high-status film director in the US, with whom DiCaprio has made five previous films. But most pertinently perhaps, Killers of the Flower Moon fully intersects with DiCaprio's campaigning priorities: it is about the real-life murders of scores of Osage tribal members in the 1920s and 30s, part of a brutal land grab over oil rights.

DiCaprio's commitment to advocacy has been a long-term endeavour: he set up the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation in 1998, shortly after the stellar success of Titanic, and, according to DiCaprio, it has disbursed more than $100m to environmental projects including tiger protection in Nepal, restoring coastlines in Somalia and Brazil, and funding reporting organisations including Inside Climate News and Global Fishing Watch, before the foundation's merger in 2019 into Earth Alliance, a conservation "platform" DiCaprio co-founded with the billionaires Brian Sheth and Laurene Powell Jobs. (DiCaprio did receive some criticism for his foundation's transparency levels: as a "donor-advised fund" it had no obligation to publicly reveal financial information.) More recently DiCaprio has focused on rewilding, pledging large sums to restore natural ecosystems in the Galápagos islands, and co-authoring an article in the Guardian with the Galápagos national park director Danny Rueda Córdova, in which rewilding was described as "the revolutionary act of bringing together people and the planet *for* people and the planet".

DiCaprio's interventions in environmental campaigning have been broadly welcomed. The UN climate adviser Janos Pasztor told the Guardian in 2016: "When people hear him talk so forcefully and clearly about a particular issue then people listen."

In an interview in 2016, DiCaprio explained his motivations to Rolling Stone magazine: "I am consumed by this … There isn't a couple of hours a day where I'm not thinking about it. It's this slow burn. It's not 'aliens invading our planet next week and we have to get up and fight to defend our country', but it's this inevitable thing, and it's so terrifying."

DiCaprio's seriousness on the issues has gone a considerable way to combating his image as a party animal and serial dater of younger women. The latter, however, is a feature in his character that is likely to dog him for a while yet.

In Killers of the Flower Moon, DiCaprio plays Ernest Burkhart, a ranch-hand who marries an Osage woman (played by Lily Gladstone) as part of a plan to acquire her oil rights. Though unsympathetic, the role plays directly into his campaigning concerns; he has shown support for Indigenous protests against fuel pipelines, and in 2016 joined attempts to curb the oil industry in telling world leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos that "our planet cannot be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong".

In a recent interview DiCaprio even suggested that these ideas were behind a big rewrite of Killers of the Flower Moon, telling Vogue that the original script "just didn't feel like it got to the heart of it" so the focus was moved away from the FBI investigation into the Osage murders and on to the experiences of the Osage themselves.

In fact, DiCaprio's recent acting career has been largely guided by this kind of oblique message-bearing: he accepts juicy – and occasionally highly repugnant – characters in films that can advance a progressive agenda. In Django Unchained he played the racist plantation owner Calvin Candie in a revenge thriller directed by Quentin Tarantino that channelled anger over the US's inability to acknowledge the legacy of slavery, while in The Revenant, for which DiCaprio won the best actor Oscar, his role as a left-for-dead frontiersman drew attention to the despoliation of the US landscape. He played an astronomy professor in the ecological-disaster satire Don't Look Up.

DiCaprio's advocacy doesn't always govern his choice of roles: environmental politics aren't a consideration in the washed-up TV actor he portrayed in Once Upon a Time in Hollywood or the crooked broker Jordan Belfort in The Wolf of Wall Street.

However, DiCaprio's Hollywood muscle has allowed him to make a series of hard-hitting documentaries that address these concerns. The 11th Hour, in 2007, warned of impending catastrophe; Before the Flood, in 2016, examined the effects of the climate emergency; and Ice on Fire, in 2019, looked at ways to head off the consequences of methane release from the Arctic ice pack. In 2021, he produced two films about threatened marine life: The Loneliest Whale and Fin. And there's no sign yet that he is going to slow down. "I had a friend say, 'Well, if you're really this passionate about environmentalism, quit acting,'" he said. "But you soon realise that one hand shakes the other, and being an artist gives you a platform."

Killers of the Flower Moon screens at the London film festival today and goes on release on 20 October in cinemas and on Apple TV+



DiCaprio takes part in a 2014 climate emergency day of action protest in New York
PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

Leonardo DiCaprio and Lily Gladstone in Scorsese's Killers of the Flower Moon
PHOTOGRAPH: APPLE TV+



The Revenant, 2015, drew attention to the despoliation of the US landscape
PHOTOGRAPH: 20TH CENTURY FOX



'Humans were much scarier than lions … It shows we really are terrifying to animals'
Liana Zanette
Lead researcher

A terrifying sight - but the sound of people speaking calmly alarmed animals more than the sound of lions snarling and growling
PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ANSTEE/ ANIMAL NEWS AGENCY

African wildlife more afraid of people than lions, study finds

Phoebe Weston

The lion has long been regarded as the world's most fearsome terrestrial carnivore but the "king of beasts" has been toppled by humans, research suggests.

Elephants, rhinos and giraffes are all now more afraid of people than they are of other apex predators, according to a scientific paper that supports the idea that humans are the world's "super predator".

Wild animals are twice as likely to run away, and abandon waterholes 40% faster, when they hear the sound of people talking, according to researchers working in South Africa's Greater Kruger national park, home to one of the largest remaining lion populations.

Running away or abandoning the waterhole was a response seen in 95% of species including giraffes, leopards, hyenas, zebras, kudus, warthogs and impalas. "Fear of humans significantly exceeded that of lions throughout the savanna mammal community," says the paper, published in Current Biology.

The voices of men and women were played speaking calmly in local languages. The lead researcher, Prof Liana Zanette, of the University of Western Ontario in Canada, said she was surprised by the magnitude of the response from wildlife, as well as the number of species affected.

"Lions should be the scariest thing out there - but humans were much scarier … It shows we really are terrifying to animals," Zanette said. She described the findings as "amazing, but depressing, too".

Fear itself can have huge effects on animal populations: fleeing a perceived threat often comes at the expense of eating and staying in good condition. "Running away from the waterhole means they will have to find another place to drink - that is a cost," said Zanette.

Surveys from Australia, North America, Europe and Asia have shown humans kill prey at higher rates than any other apex predator - partly due to the adoption of guns, and hunting with dogs - which is why they have gained the title of "super predator". Research has shown mountain lions, deer, kangaroos, wallabies and wild boar all fear humans more than they do other apex predators.

This human-induced "landscape of fear" will have cascading effects down the food chain as it changes the way animals move through landscapes. It was likely to have "considerable ecological impacts", the researchers said.

"If the fear of humans is so pervasive, and happens to all animals out there on our planet, then it really adds a new dimension to the worldwide environmental impacts that humans might be having," said Zanette.

Dr Hugh Webster, a wildlife researcher who did not work on the study, said the findings indicated that "human impacts on animal behaviour are even more wide-reaching than we thought".

He added: "Perhaps the key point is that we need to identify the most disturbance-sensitive species and engineer protections for them that allow freedom from this pervasive fear."

To conduct the study, researchers used hidden camera-speaker systems at waterholes that were triggered when an animal passed within 10 metres. Waterholes were chosen as the location because this is where lions - and hunters - tend to kill prey.

The researchers filmed the response of the animal to the sound of either humans speaking or lions snarling, growling or making hunting noises, and used non-threatening bird calls as the control sound.

The study highlights how tourism-dependent conservation may affect wildlife. Even when people are just talking in the proximity of wild animals, they may be having previously unrecognised effects.

The paper says this poses a particular dilemma in African protected areas, because although tourism may cause disturbance, many protected areas rely on wildlife tourism for funding.

True heroes don't wear capes.



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The 15-minute city

How idea for local living became a conspiracy theory



Esther Addley

Imagine a city in which you could walk or cycle to almost anywhere you needed to go in the time it took to drink a cup of coffee. Shops, medical facilities and artistic sites would be spread throughout local neighbourhoods. Remote and home working would be embraced.

Children could easily and safely cycle to school, breathing cleaner air. With less need for commuting, quieter streets could even be turned over to parks. Known as the "15-minute city" after the time it takes to get around, it's a model that promises a return to local living - and a greener, healthier, more sustainable way of life.

Sound idyllic? Not if you're Rishi Sunak. The prime minister used an interview before this week's party conference to "hit out" at the 15-minute city concept, saying there was a "relentless attack" on motorists who "depend on their cars to get to work, take their kids to school, do their shopping, see the doctor" - ignoring that this dependence is exactly what the model aims to reduce.

The transport secretary, Mark Harper, went further, telling delegates 15-minute cities were "a Labour-backed movement … to remove your freedom to get from A to B how you want".

He added: "What is sinister, and what we shouldn't tolerate, is the idea that local councils can decide how often you go to the shops, and that they can ration who uses the roads and when, and that they police it all with CCTV." The government would look into ways to stop "overzealous" councils restricting road use "if they don't follow the rules", he said.

All of which may sound like a lot of airtime to give an arcane local planning policy, but to a small number in his audience 15-minute cities represent a lot more than that. Since it was first outlined in 2016 by Carlos Moreno, a Colombian professor in urban planning at the Pantheon-Sorbonne university in Paris, the model has been embraced by city authorities in Paris, Seattle, Bogotá, Melbourne, Shanghai and beyond. In the UK, cities including Oxford, Bristol, Birmingham and Canterbury have all proposed versions of the scheme.





▲ *The model of a 15-minute city, promising a return to local living, has been embraced by the likes of Milan, top and above, while in the UK, left, it has been grouped with other controversial measures such as low-traffic neighbourhoods*
PHOTOGRAPHS: BUSÀ PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY; HEMIS/ALAMY; GEOFFREY SWAINE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

For a vocal few, the concept has become bound up in conspiracy theories about a "Great Reset" that will see people confined to highly restricted zones by a cabal of climate-obsessed authorities. The climate crisis, they believe, is contrived to let sinister powers restrict individual freedoms - and this is one of their tools to do so.

"This is totally insane," Moreno told the Guardian this week. "If we wanted to examine their arguments in reality, they don't have arguments, they have only fake information. Never, never, never have I proposed limiting people travelling for commuting, for escaping." His model, he says, is "an urban policy for living with more healthy proximity to local jobs, local commerce, green areas, sports activities, cultural activities … This is a way to liberate our economy, liberating our ecology with more bikeability, more walkability … It is not, not, not a traffic plan. I have not proposed a new traffic plan for cities. I am not in a war against cars."

The Tories may be reaching to the right amid desperate polling numbers, but explicitly evoking a known conspiracy theory is new territory. In an interview with the BBC, Andrew Bowie, a junior minister, said local authorities were "dictating to people that they must choose to access services within 15 minutes of their house". Challenged that this was a "pretend argument", Bowie said the issue was "coming up in discussions on forums online".

Daniel Jolley, an assistant professor in social psychology at the University of Nottingham who researches conspiracy theories and their social impact, said: "I can't really think of another example where we've had the government in this country lean into a conspiracy.

"The government hasn't generally played into conspiratorial narrative - on Covid for instance, or climate change - so this seems to be a unique spin."

It's also a clear pivot. As recently as March, the government was debunking fears, stating: "Fifteen-minute cities aim to provide people with more choice about how and where they travel, not to restrict movement."

Moreno first began developing his model in 2010, publishing a paper in 2016. The idea came to particular prominence after Paris's mayor, Anne Hidalgo, adopted the policy in 2019. After Covid hit, some cities, such as Milan, turned to 15-minute cities as a way of rebuilding better communities, said Moreno, but to conspiracists the model was swept up in broader fears of state control.

Moreno points to the controversy in Oxford, where the conspiracists may be confusing two separate schemes. One is a local plan by the city council that included developing 15-minute neighbourhoods, the other a proposed traffic filter system devised by Oxfordshire county council to deal with the city's famously terrible traffic that would restrict access to certain roads at certain times without a permit.

Noisy protests have been held, with appearances by far-right activists from outside the city, and local councillors have had death threats. The Canadian culture warrior Jordan Peterson pitched in, tweeting about "idiot tyrannical bureaucrats" accompanied by maps of the Oxford ring road.

Traffic management schemes such as low-traffic neighbourhoods had been controversial in many towns and boroughs, and one didn't need to be a conspiracist to have concerns, noted Jolley. "There are some questions to ask about 15-minute cities, but unfortunately, the conspiratorial rhetoric [dominates], so that questions or concerns that people may have are ignored because of some people's overarching suspicion."

Harper's language is "startling" in its similarity to conspiracy rhetoric, according to Rod Dacombe, director of the Centre for British Politics and Government at Kings College London, "because previously [the Tories] have not embraced conspiracies really in any kind of substantive way at all".

However, he added: "I don't think this is emergence of conspiracy theories as policy, I think this is political expediency. They think this is a potential wedge issue that will work for them. Emphatically it will not - hardly anybody thinks this stuff."

In fact, he said, polling data suggested "there's reasonably decent support around the country for the idea of 15-minute cities … As a political tactic, I don't think it will be very successful."

YouGov has found 62% of Britons would support the scheme's adoption in their own area.

Moreno, who has also faced intimidation and death threats, has called on Sunak to "pull himself together". "It is a great pity that the prime minister doesn't consider the vital importance of tackling climate change," he said. "Our common public enemy is not 15-minute cities, or myself. Our common public enemy is climate change."

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Bereaved fiance's warning over the risks of weight-loss surgery overseas

Emine Sinmaz

A man whose fiancee died after weight-loss surgery in Turkey has warned about the risks of medical tourism. Jon Burt said Emma Morrissey, 44, had always struggled with her weight but did not meet the criteria to have bariatric surgery on the NHS. She travelled to Termessos hospital in Antalya for a gastric sleeve operation, which is around four times more expensive in Britain.

But Morrissey from Warrington, Cheshire, died from internal bleeding on 8 July 2022, the day after a surgeon punctured her abdomen during the procedure.

Burt said he hopes Morrissey's death will raise awareness about the potential dangers of having surgery abroad. "Hopefully it stops one person going over there and ending up in the same situation," he said.

"You have got to do your research because we found a proper hospital, but there are places that are a lot less scrupulous than where we went to and given what's happened to us, you've really got to think about the risks involved."

At least 25 British citizens have died during medical tourism trips to Turkey since January 2019, according to the Foreign Office. Several publicised cases have involved bariatric surgery, including at least three this year.

At an inquest into Morrissey's death, the Cheshire coroner Jacqueline Devonish criticised the fact that mother-of-two had been reported in Turkey as dying of natural causes and not the fatal "massive bleed".

Last month, the coroner also issued a prevention of future deaths report to Regenesis Health Travel, a Warwickshire-based firm that arranged the operation without checking if Morrissey was fit for the procedure.

Morrissey was 19kg (3 stone) overweight but was not eligible to have the surgery on the NHS where patients have to have a BMI of 40 or more, or a BMI between 35 and 40 and an obesity-related condition.

A private operation in the UK costs about £12,000, but the couple paid Regenesis £2,800, which included return flights and five days' accommodation for them both.

Burt said he had been shocked to discover that some travel agencies in Britain were recommending the surgery at overseas locations that he discovered were office blocks. The couple had felt assured in choosing Termessos, a relatively new private hospital that served the local community.



▲ *Emma Morrissey and Jon Burt, who had been engaged to be married*

But Burt said he became concerned when Morrissey did not return from the operating theatre in four hours. After pushing for answers, he found out that she had suffered a bleed and had been in ICU for three hours.

Throughout the night, the surgeon updated Burt about Morrissey's condition as she suffered a series of cardiac arrests. "He did just keep saying: 'She is very gravely ill. It is very, very serious,'" Burt said. Morrissey died that lunchtime, three weeks after Burt had proposed to her.

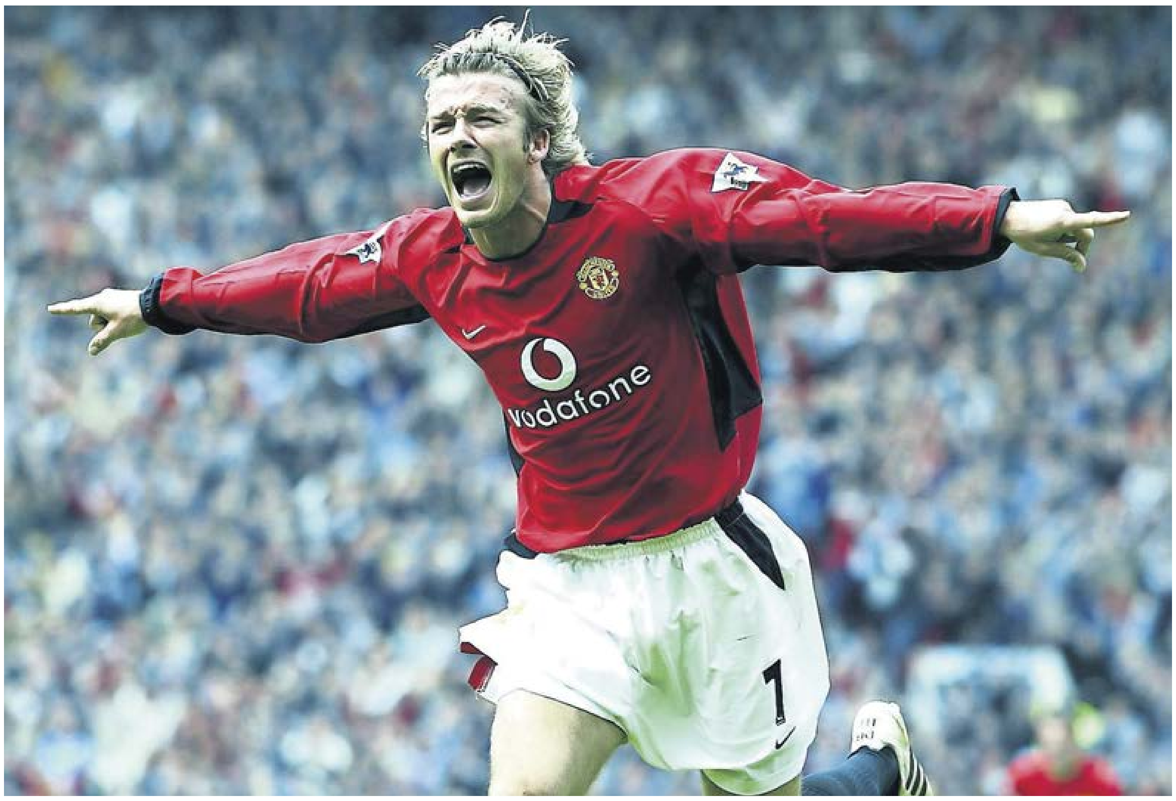
Burt only found out about some of the issues in Morrissey's care at the inquest, which the Turkish surgeon did not attend. The coroner criticised Regenesis for making "no independent enquiries to satisfy themselves that Emma was fit for the gastric sleeve procedure" and asking "unclear" pre-assessment questions. Devonish also said there had been "no evidence of an investigation into the operating-table death" by either the company, the hospital or the ministry of health in Turkey.

Burt believes that intermediary companies such as Regenesis should share more data with the NHS. "Whilst nothing can be done about the hospitals outside the UK, there needs to be statistics at least so everyone can make an informed decision. If those arranging the procedures were required to share data with the NHS we would understand more," he said.

Regenesis chose not to comment.

Beckham documentary boosts footballer's followers by half a million

Alexandra Topping



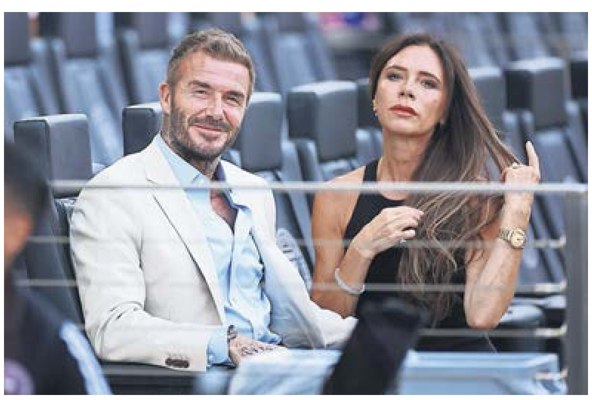
David Beckham's social media following has rocketed since the release of a Netflix documentary about his life, according to analysis.

The series from the Academy Award-winning director Fisher Stevens, also famous for playing the PR sleazeball Hugo in Succession, explores the former England captain's career and private life in four hour-long episodes. Topics include his relationship with the former Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson and his 24-year marriage to his wife Victoria.

The documentary has boosted the number of fans following the former footballer turned club-owner, with half a million added since the trailer was released for Beckham, according to analysis of user data by Casino Alpha, the online gambling reviewer.

Released on Wednesday, the documentary charts Beckham's rise from a talented east London schoolboy to the best-known footballing superstar in the world, and includes interviews with his wife and family as well as teammates Gary Neville, Eric Cantona and Rio Ferdinand.

It explores the nadir of Beckham's career, when he was sent off during England's 1998 World Cup match against Argentina and the abuse he - and his family - suffered as a result, and his depression that ensued.



◀ *The Netflix documentary charts David and Victoria Beckham's 24-year marriage and his career in football, above*
PHOTOGRAPH: HÉCTOR VIVAS/GETTY IMAGES

"Wherever I went, I got abused every day," he said. "To walk down the street and see people look at you a certain way, spit at you, abuse you, come up to your face and say some of the things that they said, that's difficult. I wasn't eating, I wasn't sleeping, I was a mess."

The documentary also sees Posh and Becks - as they were known in the early days of their courtship when she was part of the Spice Girls and he was a rising star at United - speak for the first time about the aftermath of Beckham's alleged 2003 affair with Rebecca Loos, which he denied, although they are vague on the specifics.

"Up until Madrid sometimes it felt like us against everybody else but we were together, we were connected," says Victoria Beckham. "But when we were in Spain, it didn't really feel like we had each other either. And that's sad. I can't even begin to tell you how hard it was. And how it affected me."

Beckham describes being lost after his transfer to Madrid, without his family and away from the club he had joined as a teenager. In the aftermath of newspaper reports about his alleged infidelity he said it felt like the couple were "drowning".

"I don't know how we got through it, in all honestly. Victoria is everything to me, to see her hurt was incredibly difficult, but we're fighters and at that time we needed to fight for each other and for our family."

Cathy Ferguson, wife of former Manchester Utd boss, dies at 84

Paul MacInnes

Lady Cathy Ferguson, the wife and "bedrock" of the former Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, has died at the age of 84.

A Glasgow native, Cathy Holding met Ferguson while they worked in a typewriter factory in 1964. They were married two years later.

The family confirmed the news yesterday afternoon, saying: "We are deeply saddened to confirm the passing yesterday of Lady Cathy Ferguson, survived by her husband, three sons, two sisters, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild."

Lady Ferguson once said she had feared that the man who went on to become the most successful manager in the history of British football was a "thug" when she first met him, as he was sporting a plaster on his face due to a football injury. She also recalled their first date, a trip to the cinema and a gift of a box of liquorice allsorts "of which he ate all of them".

Sir Alex spoke about their relationship when he retired as manager in 2013, after 27 years in the job. "My wife, Cathy, has been the key figure throughout my career, providing a bedrock of both stability and encouragement. Words are not enough to express what this has meant to me."

Ferguson also she she was the only person he did not answer back to.

Manchester United said: "Everyone at Manchester United sends our heartfelt condolences to Sir Alex Ferguson and his family. Lady Cathy was a … tower of strength for Sir Alex throughout his career."


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‘It’s game over, lads’: bedbug anxiety spreads from France

Elle Hunt

Paris is burning its luggage and bed linen as it battles a “scourge” of bedbugs, stoking fears of infestation around the world as pest controllers report a rise in inquiries and transport operators and hoteliers seek to assuage concerns.

The City of Light is reportedly under siege from the nocturnal bloodsuckers, leading the French transport minister, Clément Beaune, to meet transport operators. “It’s a real nightmare,” said Yacine, a schoolteacher in Paris who declined to give his surname. “I’m so afraid to take the Métro, I don’t go to the cinéma – it’s very *alarmant*.”

With Paris having just hosted both fashion week and the Rugby World Cup, bringing hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city, there are mounting fears of the problem spreading as visitors return home with an unwelcome souvenir.

In the UK, Eurostar has sought to reassure travellers that the textile surfaces of its trains are “cleaned thoroughly on a regular basis”, including with heat, and the presence of insects such as bedbugs is “extremely rare”.

Transport for London said it would continue monitoring and conducting “rigorous” cleaning of its networks. The UKHospitality chief executive, Kate Nicholls, said the organisation was aware of the “reported challenges” in France, “but there is absolutely no indication or reports of this happening in the UK”.

However, social media has already stoked fears that it may be too late. This week there was a surge in Google searches for “bedbugs” from the UK, while tensions on the trains and streets are running high. “My friend is on a train from Birmingham to Leicester and she’s just seen a bedbug,” tweeted Tian-Demi Douglas, a Londoner, on Monday. “The whole carriage is screaming. It’s game over lads. We’re fucked.”

Pest professionals have received an increase in inquiries from Londoners concerned about the coming invasion. David Lodge of Beaver Pest had seen a 17% increase since last month (and 10% over the past year), while Joseph Terrence of Simply The Pest London said he had received requests from people travelling to Paris, “asking for advice on what to do to protect themselves”.

Among many emails received this week, Blago Manov, director of Bed Bug Hunters, was contacted by a woman with concerns about her French flatmate.

“I was like, ‘Please don’t worry, just because he’s French’,” he said. “Bedbugs don’t discriminate.”

For those already losing sleep over phantom bites, the experts’ take on the “scourge” reported in Paris may not bring peace: there are just as many bedbugs now as there ever were – and probably much the same number in London and New York.

Daniel Neves, who is from France but operates in London as Inoculand Pest Control, said he had not heard of “any massive wave” from his colleagues in Paris. He agreed that knowledge of the problem – and even the pest itself – was generally lower across the Channel.

“When I am in France, and attend conferences or speak with people and tell them what I see in London, they show mostly disbelief,” he said. “Some do not have a clue what *punaises de lit* are … In France, it would be perceived as such an incredible thing to suffer from that it would cause a huge uproar.”

While bedbugs are found wherever there are people in large numbers, big cities have regular surges. New York buckled under an “invasion” of bedbugs in 2010, which reached both the mammoth Niketown store on 57th Street and the city’s Google HQ.

But the regular occurrence of bedbugs is hard to separate from factors such as rising temperatures – they thrive in warmer climates and buildings – and media attention. An infestation nearly always begins with a bug cadging a lift into someone’s home inside a suitcase or item of furniture.

While they do, inevitably, make occasional stops on public transport or cinema seats, sightings are uncommon, and infestations even less so.

That said, the risk is ever present, and elevated anywhere with a high turnover of warm bodies. It is impossible to protect yourself entirely, according to Lyubo Kiryakov of Bed Bug Specialist.

“The cinema is a dark place,” he said. “What are you going to do, bring a torch and start looking under your seat? Unless you catch them crawling around, you won’t be able to see them.”

The global bedbug boom is a problem of our own making. After being nearly globally eradicated in the early 20th century, thanks to the development of powerful insecticides such as DDT, the wily bloodsuckers evolved a resistance just as international travel took off.

“It allowed them to advance and enhance their skills, basically: they’ve become smarter,” said Manov.

Today’s streetwise bedbugs – now with a tougher exoskeleton – can easily tell which areas have been treated with pesticides and avoid them, just as they can tell the difference between a blood meal and the bag they rode in on.

An estimated 30% of the population do not react to being bitten, often allowing an infestation to go untreated for longer. This seems especially common among older people, who may be immobile or even bed-bound and more vulnerable to distress.

But anyone is fair game. Manov’s clients have included members of the royal family – Dutch, not British, he added – and a “very famous fashion director” (he declined to say which brand). “We’ve also had some of the richest people in the UK. Nobody’s insured against bedbugs.”

But between a few straightforward preventive measures and swift action in the event of a find, Manov said bedbugs did not have to spell disaster or death by boil washing for your wardrobes and bedding. “The general assumption is that you need to burn your house down,” he said.

Bedbugs do not lie in wait indefinitely: they are drawn out by the promise of a night-time feast and, once detected, they can be speedily eradicated by professionals.

“It’s a myth that they can survive for months without a blood meal – and it’s unfair, because it scares people,” said Manov. “I’m trying to reassure them, and put their minds at ease… It’s not so difficult to get rid of bedbugs. People shouldn’t be overly stressed.”

Certainly, he added, “don’t be quick to blame your French flatmate”.



▲ Insecticide is applied to trams in Nice, though experts say infestations on transport are very rare

PHOTOGRAPH: DYLAN MEIFFRET/ MEDIADRUMIMAGES/ MAXPPP



◀ A pest control technician sprays a flat in Paris. There are fears the city is suffering an infestation of bedbugs

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP

> *‘Please don’t worry just because he’s French. Bedbugs don’t discriminate’*
>
> **Blago Manov**
> *Pest control expert*

Don’t panic!
How to protect yourself



Check your lodgings
When away from home, Blago Manov recommends “DIY inspections” of the bed frame and beneath the sheets for traces such as exoskeletons, eggs and faeces (which leave a telltale dark mark on mattresses that’s hard to get rid of). The adult bugs themselves are visible to the naked eye, resembling “flat apple seeds”.

Don’t unpack your bag
Lyubo Kiryakov of Bed Bug Specialist advises against keeping your suitcase near the bed or unpacking your belongings into the wardrobe or drawers if you’re just visiting. Unwashed clothes are also a risk factor: “Bedbugs can smell you on your belongings.”

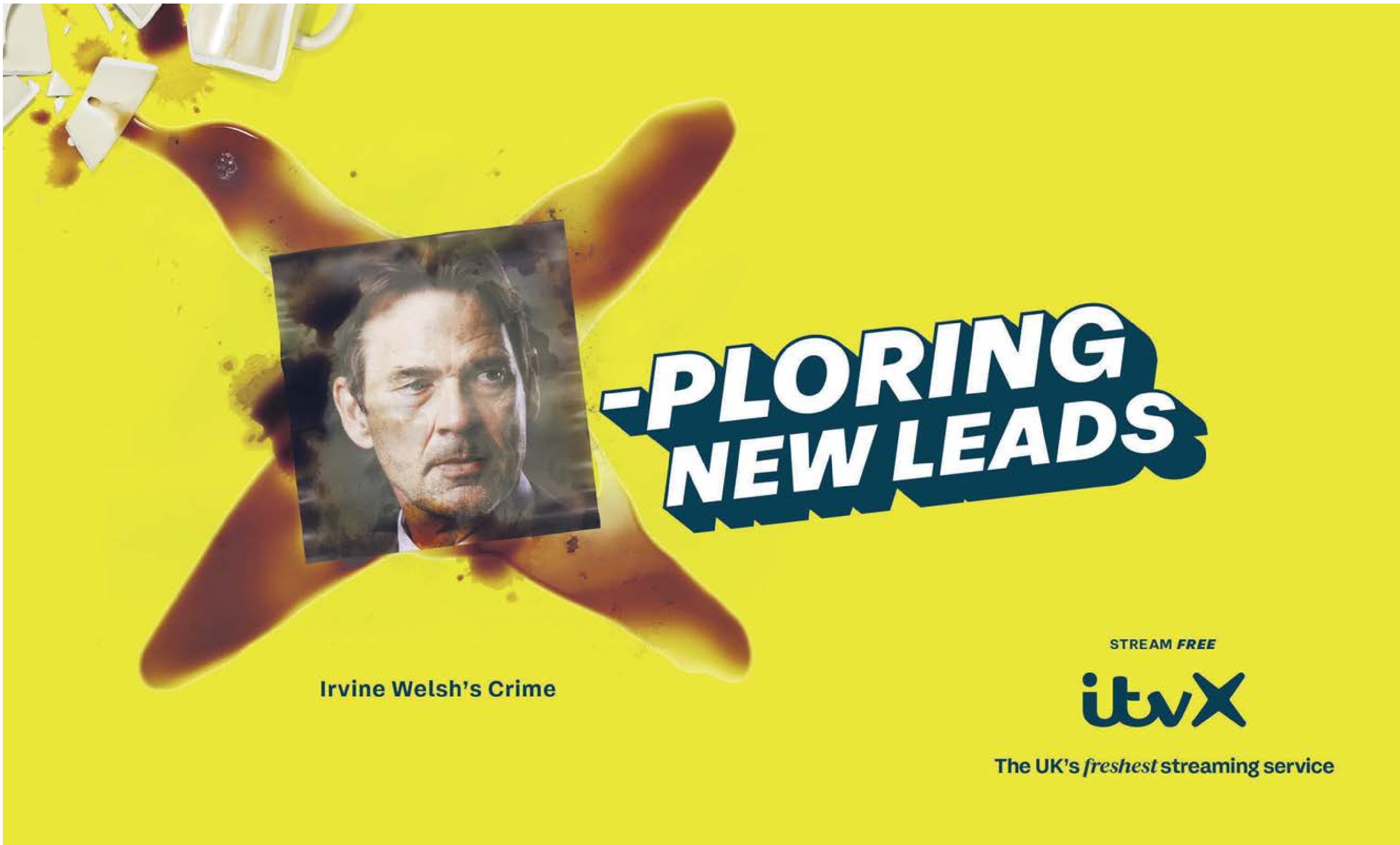
Check for hitchhikers
Manov also identifies baggage handling through airports as ground zero for bedbugs: “When I take my bag from the belt, I always give it a quick shake and inspection.” Whether you will be able to spot a bedbug “depends on how many bedbugs you’ve picked up”, says Kiryakov.

Look for bites
Given the high proportion of the population who don’t react, you may sleep tight even if bedbugs do bite. “A lot of people are not actually aware that they have been bitten by bedbugs,” says Manov. If there’s any cause for suspicion, check for visible signs on skin that’s exposed while sleeping and spots of blood on bedding.

Hoover or steam
While “quick fixes” for bedbugs abound online, they are unlikely to do the job and may drive them further into hiding. “You’ll only disturb the infestation, and make our job even more difficult,” says Kiryakov. “What you can do is thoroughly hoover the mattress and bed frame and, if you have a steamer, apply steam, which gets rid of bedbugs, instantly.”
Elle Hunt



▶ *Adult bedbugs are visible to the naked eye and resemble ‘flat apple seeds’*



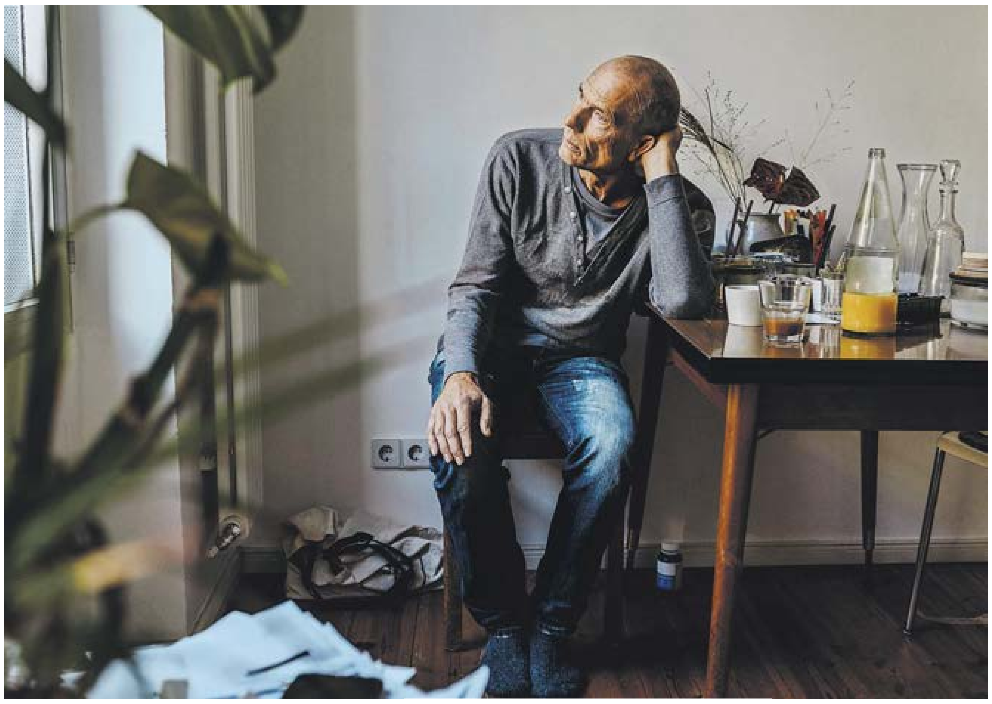
Health

Is the male menopause real – or just a myth?

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

There were reports this week that "male menopause" policies are in place at several NHS trusts, with some HR managers suggesting staff could receive up to a year of sick pay if they experience symptoms. This is despite the NHS itself stressing that the male menopause is not a clinical condition and that it is not national NHS policy to offer leave for it.

We take a look at the science behind the term.



◀ *The NHS does not recognise the male menopause as a clinical condition, and experts say many symptoms may be related to lifestyle*
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

What is meant by the 'male menopause'?
The male menopause, also known as the andropause, refers to a cluster of features seen in men in their late 40s to early 50s, such as depression, loss of sex drive, mood swings, erectile dysfunction, problems sleeping and loss of muscle mass. The NHS notes this is not a clinical condition. Rather, it says, it is an "unhelpful term sometimes used in the media".

So this isn't a male version of what women go through?
No. Ravinder Anand-Ivell, associate professor of endocrinology and reproductive physiology at the University of Nottingham, says the two are quite different.

"The menopause represents acute symptoms caused by the relatively abrupt cessation of ovarian hormonal function due to the exhaustion of a woman's egg reserve at around 50 plus [or] minus five years of age," she says. "Men have no equivalent physiology."

Prof Richard Sharpe, an expert in male reproductive disorders at the University of Edinburgh, agrees.

"There is no question that, in normal men at the population level, blood testosterone levels decline with age from late 30s-early 40s onwards," he said. "However, there is no precipitous fall in [blood testosterone] levels akin to that which occurs for oestrogen levels in women at the menopause."

Sharpe also stresses that some men may experience little blood testosterone decline when ageing. "It can be quite variable between individuals – unlike the 100% occurrence of menopause in women," he said.

Does that mean the 'male menopause' is made up?
Not exactly. "There is a condition in some elderly men, known as late onset hypogonadism (LOH) or more recently called functional hypogonadism, which is characterised by low concentrations of testosterone in the blood together with symptoms of testosterone deficiency such as loss of libido, bone and muscle weakness," says Anand-Ivell.

But, she adds, this occurs in approximately 2.1% of men, almost exclusively over the age of 65.

While some men with LOH may benefit from testosterone therapy, its wider use has caused controversy, with some experts raising concerns it is being given to patients who have some similar symptoms to LOH but may have blood testosterone levels within the normal range for that age group.

"This is what I refer to as a 'charlatans' charter' as such general symptoms will occur in most men during – and before – ageing, but are almost always driven by other factors," says Sharpe.

So what is behind this cluster of symptoms?
Anand-Ivell says men who report sudden symptoms, and at a younger age, may well be experiencing some other underlying health problem.

Indeed, as the NHS notes, features that have been ascribed to a "male menopause" could be down to lifestyle factors or psychological problems.

"For example, erectile dysfunction, low sex drive and mood swings may be the result of stress, depression [or] anxiety," the NHS says, adding that other causes of erectile dysfunction include smoking or heart problems. The NHS also cites poor diet, lack of sleep and low self-esteem.

As for treatment, Prof Frederick Wu of Manchester Royal Infirmary says the approach is threefold: "Lifestyle change, weight loss and improve general health," he says.

Why is the male menopause getting attention?
Experts say a key reason is money. "A lot of the 'andropause' literature stems from commercial interests, particularly in the USA, wishing to draw spurious comparisons with the female menopause in order to sell testosterone-related products for which there is no clinical evidence of benefit," says Anand-Ivell.

The latest headlines, meanwhile, have been fuelled by the revelation about the male menopause policies at some NHS trusts. "I am amazed that any health board would even talk about there being an andropause let alone suggesting time off," says Sharpe.

MPs and peers call for ‘immediate stop’ to use of live facial recognition

Jamie Grierson

Dozens of cross-party MPs and peers have joined a campaign for an “immediate stop” to the use of live facial recognition surveillance by police and private companies.

The former cabinet minister David Davis, the Lib Dem leader, Ed Davey, the Green MP, Caroline Lucas, and the former shadow attorney general Shami Chakrabarti are among 65 members of the House of Commons and House of Lords to call for a halt to the technology’s use.

The campaign is spearheaded by the privacy advocate Big Brother Watch and is also backed by 31 groups including Liberty, Amnesty International and the Race Equality Foundation.

Police have used live facial recognition at large-scale public events, including King Charles’s coronation.

The statement said: “We hold differing views about live facial recognition surveillance, ranging from serious concerns about its incompatibility with human rights, to the potential for discriminatory impact, the lack of safeguards, the lack of an evidence base, an unproven case of necessity or proportionality, the lack of a sufficient legal basis, the lack of parliamentary consideration, and the lack of a democratic mandate.

“We call on UK police and private companies to immediately stop using live facial recognition for public surveillance.”

> *‘The UK’s reckless approach makes us a total outlier in the democratic world’*
>
> **Silkie Carlo**
> *Big Brother Watch*

The statement comes after the policing minister, Chris Philp, announced plans to make UK passport photos searchable by police. Philp said he planned to integrate data from the police national database, the Passport Office and other national databases to help police find a match with the “click of one button”.

Civil liberty campaigners said the government’s plans would be an “Orwellian nightmare” that amounted to a “gross violation of British privacy principles”.

The director of Big Brother Watch, Silkie Carlo, said: “The UK’s reckless approach to face surveillance makes us a total outlier in the democratic world, especially against the backdrop of the EU’s proposed ban.

“As hosts of the AI summit in autumn, the UK should show leadership in adopting new technologies in a rights-respecting way. There must be an urgent stop to live facial recognition, parliamentary scrutiny and a much wider democratic debate before we introduce such a privacy-altering technology to British life.”

A Home Office spokesperson told the BBC that use of the technology had a “robust legal framework”.

They added: “Facial recognition, including live facial recognition, has a sound legal basis that has been confirmed by the courts and has already enabled a large number of serious criminals to be caught.”



PHOTOGRAPH: BEN BIRCHALL/PA

A cracking mural Morph visits a new mural in Cabot Circus, Bristol, titled A Cracking Day Out in Bristol, featuring Aardman animation characters on a 130-sq-metre painted wall.





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Go fish
What's now safe to buy – and what to avoid?



◀ Arctic northern prawns have a green rating, whereas North Sea prawns have joined the red list
PHOTOGRAPH: EKATERINA SMIRNOVA/GETTY





◀ The Good Fish Guide suggests European hake as a sustainable swap for cod, left, and North Sea plaice in place of haddock

▲ Sea bass from the west of Scotland has received a red rating
PHOTOGRAPHS: VAARA/GETTY/ ISTOCKPHOTO

Zoe Wood

British diners were this week warned off buying a dozen types of seafood – including dover sole – from the Irish Sea because of depleted fish populations. They joined the growing numbers of fish on the "red" or "avoid" lists in the Good Fish Guide, which aims to help consumers make ocean-friendly choices.

The guide, compiled by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), provides environmental ratings using a traffic-light system. But of the 337 wild fisheries around the British Isles, only 13% have a green rating while 25% are red. So what do you need to know to make sustainable fish choices?

What has happened?
In the autumn update, 117 seafood ratings were reviewed by the MCS, leading to 53 changes with 19 moving down the sustainability scale. Of these, a dozen "regrettably received red ratings".

Those downgraded to red include: pollack caught in the Channel and Celtic Seas; beam-trawled plaice from the eastern Channel; dover sole from the Irish Sea; prawns from the North Sea and sea bass from the west of Scotland. There was a modicum of good news, with North Sea and Channel mullet and North Sea sprat moving up to amber, resulting in a net increase of eight on the red list.

I'd still like to eat fish this weekend, how can I make sure it is sustainable?
A good place to start is on the Good Fish Guide website (it can be downloaded on to your phone) so you can check a fish rating when you are planning a meal or in the supermarket. "We always recommend people look for 'what, where and how' on labels," says the Good Fish Guide's manager, Charlotte Coombes. "If that's there you've got enough information to get a rating."

Alternatively, look for the MSC's blue tick on wild-caught fish and seafood (or the Aquaculture Stewardship Council's (ASC) green logo on farmed products).The label is the "simplest way for the consumer to know that they can eat the seafood without having to worry about whether or not it is sustainable," says George Clark, the MSC's UK & Ireland programme director.

Now I know what to look for on the packet, what fish should I buy?
The reality is fish lovers tend to eat the same things over and over, with 80% of the seafood eaten in the UK made up of the "big five": cod, haddock, salmon, tuna and prawns. This puts a lot of pressure on a handful of wild stocks and while there are some sustainable sources, experts have come up with some sustainable swaps. In place of cod it suggests European hake, which has the same meaty texture.

25%
Proportion of wild fisheries in the British Isles, out of 337, that have a red rating in the Good Fish Guide

Instead of haddock, buy North Sea plaice. If it has to be tuna, buy skipjack or albacore caught by pole and line (or give sardines a whirl).

Everyone keeps telling me to eat more oily fish, like salmon, is that OK?
Avoid wild-caught Atlantic salmon which is on the red list. Instead buy Pacific (pink, red or keta) caught in Alaska, organic or ASC-certified Scottish salmon. "Anything that relies on rivers as well as the sea, like salmon and eels, is really under pressure," says Coombes. Easy-to-cook salmon regularly tops polls as the nation's favourite fish and while it's not easy to replace its orange-pink flesh, any firm white fish such as hake or haddock can be cooked in a similar way. Another option is farmed rainbow trout.

What about prawns, are there any good options?
Prawns can be sustainable, depending on the species and where and how they were caught or farmed, so check the information on the packet. Arctic northern prawns (or shrimp), for example, with a green rating are the best option, whereas North Sea prawns have joined the red list. For king and tiger prawns, look for eco labels, including organic or ASC, and avoid buying uncertified prawns from places such as Indonesia, Vietnam and India.

Does this mean I should stop going to the fish and chip shop?
No, you can still go out for fish and chips. Andrew Crook, who speaks for the industry as the president of the National Federation of Fish Friers, suggests customers ask shop owners about their policy but insists the industry is focused on sustainable sourcing. "Without cod and haddock there won't be any fish shops, so it is in our interest to have well-managed fisheries," he says, adding that the majority of cod and haddock comes from the Arctic's Barents Sea or around Iceland.

Is sea bass totally off the menu?
No, but the guide's advice is to buy the farmed fish. In 2015 sea bass was in "real trouble", says Coombes. "They were quite concerned about stocks and brought in emergency management measures and it has been recovering. We are still a bit worried about wild sea bass as stocks are not where they should be. Going for the farmed option takes the pressure off the wild population while it's still recovering."

Is farmed or wild better from an environmental point of view?
Neither. Both systems have good options and really unsustainable ones. Wild-capture fisheries can be harmful to the seabed and result in unwanted bycatch, while aquaculture can affect the environment through pollution from chemicals, escaped fish and disease. For farmed fish customers should seek out the ASC or "RSPCA-assured" labels for peace of mind.

Should I just buy omega-3 pills instead? Where does that fish oil come from?
Swallowing a golden-coloured fish oil supplement is touted as a way of getting a health-boosting shot of omega-3 nutrients every day without eating fish. While some fish oil is made from cod, mackerel or sardines, most of it comes from Peruvian anchovetas, a type of anchovy, with the Guardian reporting concerns about overfishing and environmental damage caused by the industry. There are a growing number of supplements containing sustainable fish oil.

TV review A blistering return of easily the best Marvel series in years

Loki season two
Disney+
★★★☆☆

Alexi Duggins

If ever there was a time for a second season of Loki, it's now. The first outing was a witty romp through time and space, in which Tom Hiddleston's lovably narcissistic Norse god charmed the pants off viewers. There were wild cameos (Richard E Grant as a weird alternate Loki!). There was sizzling chemistry (the bromance with Owen Wilson's Agent Mobius!). There was even the tender blossoming of love (with Loki's metaverse alter ego Sylvie). So, naturally, the Marvel Cinematic Universe chose to follow up with a series of flops, culminating in June's Secret Invasion.

Luckily, Loki's return suggests it will shake off Marvel's track record of TV tedium. We're taken to the moment the last season left off: the aftermath of Sylvie (Sophia Di Martino) killing He Who Remains - the shadowy figure behind temporal police the Time Variance Authority (TVA). There are slow-mo chases, car crashes in flying vehicles and Loki running into effigies of He Who Remains. You can't avoid season one if you expect any of this to make sense.

A good chunk of the opener consists of Hiddleston vanishing into another timeline. There are temporal loops, baffling causality chains and the start of what will be a series-long plot about stabilising a "temporal loom" - the characters may as well be chanting "MacGuffin".



▼ *Tom Hiddleston as Loki with Wunmi Mosaku as Hunter B-15, and Owen Wilson as Mobius*
PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH GATRELL/MARVEL

It's all a bit overcomplicated - a disappointing choice of direction, if predictable. Less explicable is the decision to do away with the beating heart of season one - the surprisingly lovely romance between Loki and Sylvie. This time, Hiddleston buddies up with Agent Mobius in an effort to fix the McTimeWotsit. This makes for more zingtastic back-and-forth between Hiddleston and Wilson, but the show loses emotional heft.

Nonetheless, the performances are as excellent as ever. Hiddleston is fantastic in every mode, from debonair to monstrous or ashen after a brutal insult from Sylvie.

Di Martino is a bubbling pot of empathy. Wunmi Mosaku's reprisal of her role as a TVA agent is ineffably intense. And Owen Wilson is … Owen Wilson: a twinkle in the eye in human form.

A few episodes in, things are settling into an enjoyable enough - if not tremendously exciting - groove. Then a gigantic cliffhanger upends the narrative, wrongfoots the viewer and blows the show wide open.

The final two instalments aren't available for preview, so it is hard to say whether this will kickstart the show into scaling the heights of its first season. But one thing is certain: this is easily the best Marvel TV series in years - for all that's worth.



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Eyewitnessed
Pictures of the week



▶ *Judges arrive at Westminster Abbey, London, for the annual service to mark the start of the legal year*
DAN KITWOOD/GETTY



▲ *A man catches swamp barb fish in the Belai Beel wetlands near Gazipur, Bangladesh*
SYED MAHABUBUL KADER/ZUMA/ SHUTTERSTOCK





▶ *Aliyana Stokes, 10, and her brother Bryson, five, take part in a firearms safety class for children at a gun range in rural Maryland set up for African Americans*
PHOTOGRAPH: MATT MCCLAIN/ SIENA AWARDS 2023





◀ *Migrants, mostly from Venezuela, and a dog climb on a freight train that had stopped in the Chihuahuan desert, Mexico*
DAVID PEINADO/ ANADOLU AGENCY/ GETTY



▲ *A 12-point stag roars to deter rivals in Richmond Park, south-west London, at the start of deer mating season*
ADRIAN DENNIS/ AFP/GETTY



▲ *Robert Downey Jr and Cate Blanchett attend Stella McCartney's show at Paris fashion week*
MARC PIASECKI/ WIREIMAGE



◀ *Bathers at the Széchenyi spa in Budapest, Hungary, as temperatures reached 30C this week*
GAVIN RODGERS/ PIXEL8000

One for the snappy dresser? Crocs unveil new cowboy boot design

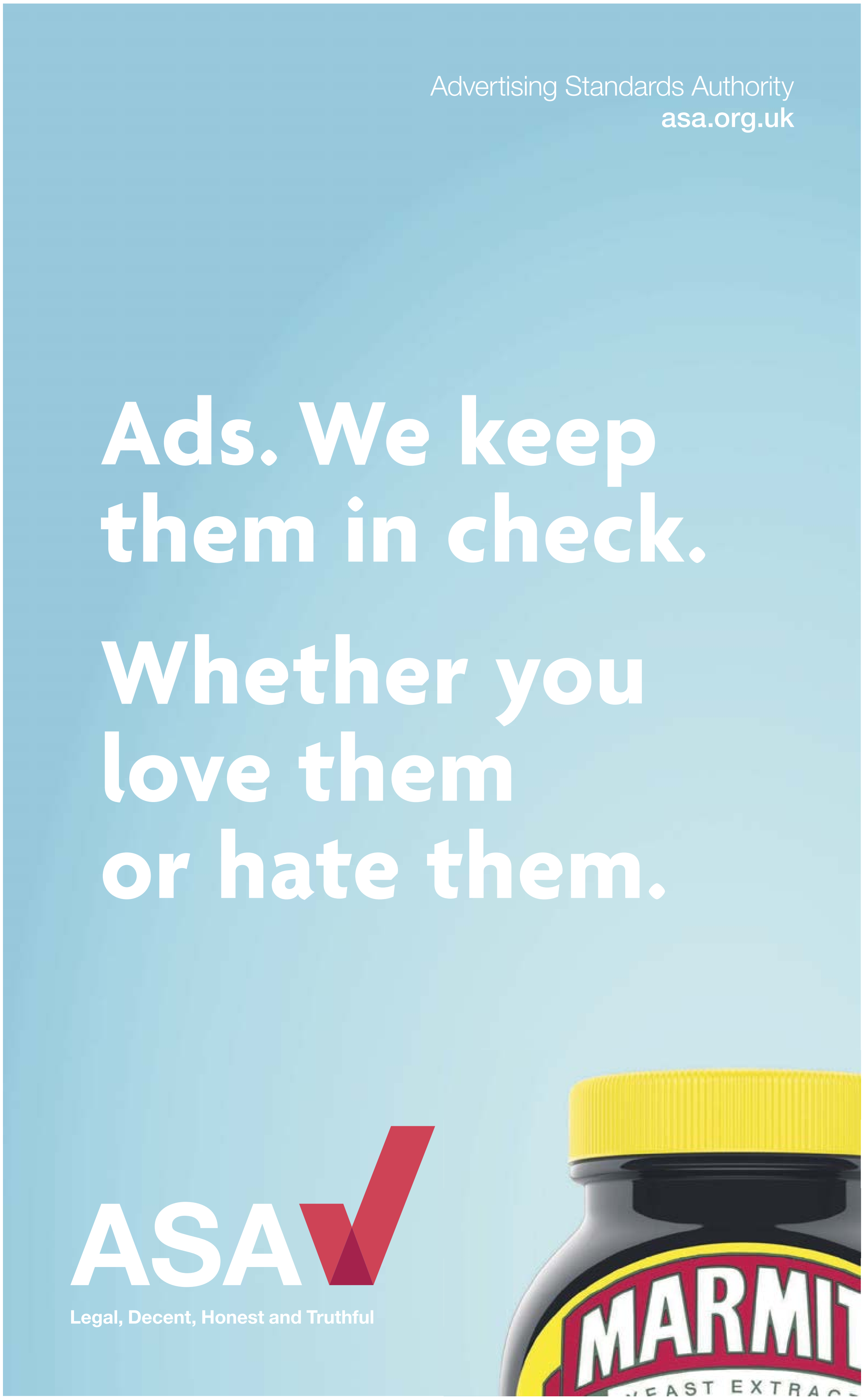
Kevin Rawlinson

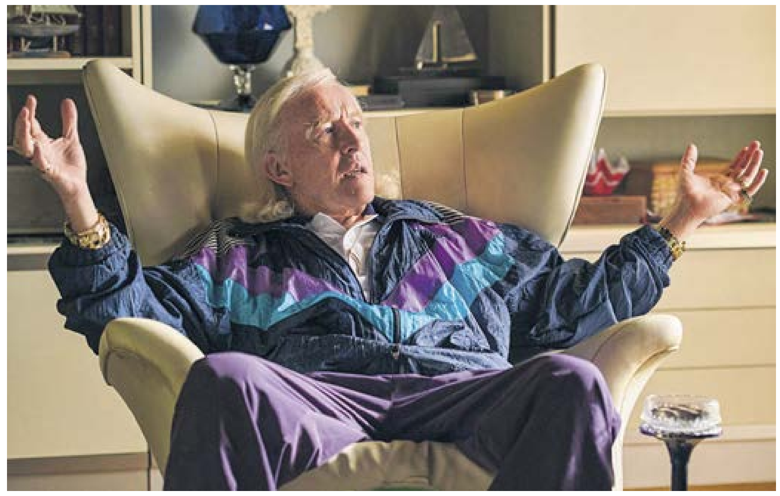

◀ *The Crocs cowboy boots will retail for about £100*

For all they have conquered, Crocs footwear has rarely advanced far beyond the ankle. But that will change when the company launches a classic cowboy boot design.

The footwear brand said the boots would feature "a high-shine croc-embossed texture and bold western-inspired stitching". They would be "embellished with unique metallic Jibbitz charms" and include spin-able spurs attached to the back-strap. The boots would be available online and in some stores for \$120 (about £100) from 23 October.

Crocs shoes have been spotted on the feet of the musicians Stormzy and Post Malone, while the artist David Hockney wore a yellow pair to a luncheon with King Charles.




▲ *Steve Coogan as the cunningly unctuous serial sex offender Jimmy Savile in the BBC One drama series The Reckoning* PHOTOGRAPH: MATT SQUIRE/BBC/ITV STUDIOS

The Reckoning Savile drama contains some of TV's most shocking scenes

Mark Lawson

There were no cameraphones when Margaret Thatcher spent Christmas Day at Chequers with Jimmy Savile in the 1980s. But the BBC's Savile drama The Reckoning serves as a sort of historical Instagram, bringing vivid and intimate pictures from the kitchen and halls of the prime ministerial retreat.

With Steve Coogan's cunningly unctuous Savile and Fenella Woolgar's icily strategic Thatcher matching each other for full body-capture acting, these superb scenes in the third of the four hour-long episodes illustrate how the prime minister so fell for Savile that she placed a psychotic serial sex offender in charge of Broadmoor psychiatric hospital.

Savile's seduction of the country's top politician (who eventually gave him knighthood) serves as a metaphor for how the platinum-haired Yorkshireman groomed and used a prince (now king), a pope (who granted Savile a separate Vatican knighthood), BBC managers - who signed him up to Top of the Pops and Jim'll Fix It, and NHS bosses - who allowed him the run of their wards, to indulge his paedophilia, and morgues to enact his necrophilia.

The director, Sandra Goldbacher, and the producer, Clare Shepherd, never allow the camera to be a voyeur, what Savile has done to the young victims is implied by shocked or tearful faces. It helps that the writer, Neil McKay, and Jeff Pope, an executive producer, are TV's supreme court of criminal judgment, having brought Peter Sutcliffe, Fred West, Myra Hindley and Ian Brady to their dock.

Bookended by reality interviews with four Savile survivors (Dorien, Susan, Sam, Kevin), the four episodes cover the years 1962 to 2011, requiring the 57-year-old Coogan to age down 21 years and up 27 years to portray Savile from northern dance-hall DJ to corpse.

Some think the drama should never have been made; others that, if so, then not by the BBC, which funded Savile's rise and failed to prevent his offending. Technically, The Reckoning is an independent production by ITV Studios, with McKay and Pope denying any censorship. It fulfils their aim to show Savile from the inside, with particular emphasis on his warped Catholicism, and how powerful people dupe institutions.

In order, the institutions most discomforted by the drama - which debuts on BBC One at 9pm on Monday - will be the NHS, the Thatcherite Conservative party and the Roman Catholic church.

The BBC seems to get a less severe reckoning: managers are shown twice trying to bring Savile to account in the 60s and 70s, but being thwarted by his lying and lawyers. Those investigations did take place but their space and power within the scripts may leave the impression that the BBC was more rigorous than many suspect. Indulgence of the presenter is in effect blamed on the ratings greed of Sir Bill Cotton, a BBC boss who has been dead longer than Savile.

The effect is to suggest Savile's BBC activities were very far in the past. McKay and Pope were questioned after the press screening on that historical emphasis and the absence of the cancelled Newsnight investigation into Savile in 2011 that led inadvertently to the exposure of his crimes by ITV. The programme-makers replied that those storylines would be a "whole separate drama". Charlotte Moore, the BBC's director of content, should immediately commission it so there can be a reckoning for those involved in Savile's latter era at the BBC, some of them still receiving pay and pensions from the licence payer.

Lucy Mangan
Diary



That chill in the air? It's the ghost of my missing goals and dreams

Monday

At last! The nights are drawing in. A chill is in the air. A cardigan is in my bag. My favourite time of year has arrived - the point at which the hunt for next year's diary can legitimately begin.

Imagine my dismay when I sallied forth, rucksack on back, cardigan at the ready, to make my first foray into the realm of options the capital's stationery emporia had to offer me, only to find that - not for the first time - the world has moved on without me and in entirely the wrong direction. To wit: in order to organise your life in 2024 it is now incumbent upon you to state your Goals first. Every diary (bar the tremendously formal, proper-office stuff that I don't want because it gives me flashbacks to my extremely ill-advised years as a trainee lawyer) now has space for your Goals. Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, life - all sorts of Goals. And frequently space for dreams, affirmations, manifestations and I don't know what all else because I'd set fire to them by then.

My only Goal - or Dream - is to manifest a diary that allows me to record appointments and deadlines without being interrupted by drivel. Could someone affirm that this is still possible in 2023?

Tuesday

Not NOW, *Cimex lectularius*, NOT NOW.

Fears are growing that the bedbug infestation that is consuming Paris and other major French cities is about to make it over here, via the Eurostar. Via the clothing and luggage of people using the Eurostar, that is.

I don't mean the bugs are booking their own tickets, stretching out their six legs in comfort with a small bottle of pinot noir and a map for a well planned invasion spread out on the table between them.

It's one of those news items you read and think "Goodness. In better times that would really perturb me. But - hi! - I'm absolutely maxed out by every other thing in the entire world that's happening and so … No." And bedbugs go on the list of things you would love to be able to worry about one day because it would mean life had got so, so much better.

Wednesday

Here's a trend I never, ever saw coming, especially not here in Britain and especially not now: sober weddings. Apparently it is increasingly common for guests simply to choose not to drink at a nuptial gathering.



Look, stop shouting 'Exterminate him!' It can't be done

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTYN WHEATLEY/ I-IMAGES; STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

Who, who can get through a wedding without a drink? If you're not bored out of your skull during the whole tedious day it's because you're in love with one (or in very difficult cases both) of the happy couple. Either way, booze is required.

If you are enraptured by the whole thing, you will drink to try and wrap your head around the infinity of love that can somehow be encompassed by two people (and I will make sure I am sitting far away from you throughout the ceremony and wedding breakfast). What other state is there at a wedding? What have I missed? Who is choosing not to drink? Identify yourselves - I am wholly intrigued.



Penny's lost it, I tell you, lost it completely!

Thursday

National Poetry Day is here. Now, as a general rule I cannot stand poetry. I don't do well with emotion generally, and when it gets distilled into little short lines that you cannot help but take in if someone thrusts it in front of you I go into meltdown. But I make an exception for one poem and one poem only, which is the one that, when I was a child, Dad would suddenly draw himself up to his full four foot seven in height and begin to declaim in a bloodcurdling fashion to which the paltry resource of the printed word can do no justice and which went thus:

"I do not like thee, Doctor Fell…"

[Insert pause that rolls out to just short of the crack of doom while his six-year-old daughter whitens with terror.]

"The reason why, I cannot tell…"

[Why? Why not? Bound by the doctor's illimitably evil powers? What was the reason? Imagination supplied a thousand unwanted possibilities as my knees buckled and I fell quietly to the floor.]

"But this I know…"

[Quivering daughter curls herself into the foetal position.]

"And know full well…"

[Dad's voice drops an octave and he goes full Olivier.]

"I do not like thee, Doctor Fell."

Hours later, Mum would pass me still gibbering on the floor and shout at me lovingly until mental equilibrium was restored.

Now that's a poem.

Friday

Attention has refocused this week on the Partygate scandal, thanks to Channel 4's dramatisation of the 15 illegal wine-fuelled gatherings that took place in Downing Street between early 2020 and the spring of 2021 when the rest of the country was on lockdown. Not partying. Not seeing friends or family. Not even when they were one of the dying in hospital, alone.

My aunt is thinking about it too, but then she always is. It is coming up to the third anniversary of her son David's death from Covid, on 13 November 2020. That's the day the alleged party in Boris and Carrie's flat was being held to bid farewell to Johnson's chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, and communications director, Lee Cain. I hope they had a good time. David was asking where his mum was, and Judy was trying to tell him she was on the phone that a nurse was holding up to his ear as he died without anyone who loved him there to hold his hand.

I heard her grief the day he died. On the phone, again, because - thinking the rules applied to everyone and understanding the reasons for them - we didn't travel to be with her and attended the funeral online. And I heard it again in full and overflowing measure when the news broke last year about the parties. You think there is nothing that can make the pain of losing a child worse. But hearing that the people who kept you from him were toasting colleagues and playing Abba - Winner Takes It All, according to reports - while porters wheeled him down to the morgue? That does.

David is just one of hundreds who died on that day, and thousands who died while the government danced and drank. The pain they have caused is indescribable. I wish they could feel a mere fraction of it.

Keegan told to keep his opinions on 'lady footballers' to himself

Paul MacInnes

Kevin Keegan has been asked to "keep his opinions to himself" after he was reported to have claimed female pundits were not convincing covering England men's games.

The former England manager and Newcastle legend reportedly told an audience in Bristol he had "a problem" because he didn't think it was "the same experience".

Keegan specifically questioned the suitability of former players for the England women's side describing incidents in men's international matches. "If I see an England lady footballer saying … 'If I would have been in that position I would have done this', I don't think it's quite the same," he said.

Keegan was also reported in the Times as saying it was a "great time for the ladies" in terms of football broadcasting and that "some of the girl [presenters] we have are so good, they are better than the guys".

Keegan was reported to have said at the event: "I'm not as keen, I've got to be honest, and it may not be a view shared. I don't like to listen to ladies talking about the England men's team at the match because I don't think it's the same experience. I have a problem with that."

The organisation Women In Football responded to Keegan's remarks by calling on him to think twice before speaking because of the consequences such remarks could have.

In a statement the group said: "Kevin Keegan seems to be advocating a kind of gender apartheid in football, whereby the men's game can only be discussed by men, and 'ladies' are banished to a separate room. Like everyone else he's entitled to an opinion, but on social media the trolls and abusers are already out in force to applaud him.

"Women in Football's survey earlier this year found that 82% of women working in the game have experienced discrimination at work, including sexism, sexual harassment and derogatory comments on ability based on gender.

"In this context Keegan and people of a similar mindset have a moral obligation to keep their opinions to themselves, rather than add weight to the narrative that enables online abuse and threats of violence."



▲ *Kevin Keegan said he did not like female pundits to cover men's games*

Joey Barton, the Bristol Rovers manager, said Keegan was "bang on". But Lianne Sanderson, a former Lioness, posted: "I won't be doing any interviews about Kevin Keegan's comments … But I would absolutely 'Love it' if he would shut up!"

Women's football remains a magnet for social media abuse. Two years ago the former England international Karen Carney deleted her then Twitter account after she received a barrage of online abuse over remarks she made on TV about the men's Leeds United side.

On Thursday, in a message posted on X, formerly Twitter, Women In Football added: "There is more than one reason why Keegan is seen as an icon of the 1970s."

Theatre review

Puzzling farce that's still a tonic



▼ *Edward Hogg as Argan with Jessica Ransom (Béline) in the Sheffield Theatres production*
PHOTOGRAPH: MANUEL HARLAN

The Hypochondriac
Crucible, Sheffield
★★★☆☆

Nick Ahad

This show presents several puzzles: how can it drag for 40 minutes and then zip along for 30? How are there underpowered performances then hilarious turns moments later? How does Sarah Tipple, the director, marshall her resources in the Crucible perfectly and then lose grip on its demands?

This Roger McGough translation of Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* won fans in 2009. For a good portion of the first act, you wonder why this piece wasn't left in the past. The staging feels laborious and, while all farces demand a lot of set up, it takes time to hit its straps.

When it does, with the arrival of Chris Hannon and Garmon Rhys as Dr Diaforius and his son Thomas, it becomes genuinely funny.

McGough's story via Molière tells of wealthy Argan who spends his time and money on constant visits to doctors, hoping to stave off death. While he wants to marry his daughter off to a doctor to avoid costly bills, the servants, his brother and the rest of the household hatch another plan.

The beautifully intricate set from Colin Richmond dwarfs all performances until Hannon and Rhys arrive. They appear to fully understand the demands of farce. Their performances have an air of postmodernism - they allow the audience in on the joke and we laugh at the absurdity. It's a puzzling, curate's egg of a piece that is not without good bits.

Until 21 October

Scotland and north of England expect deluge as south set for 25C

Kevin Rawlinson and agency

The UK is likely to experience a sharp contrast in weather over the weekend, with people in northern areas told to prepare for torrential rain and possible flooding, while temperatures could reach 25C in the south.

The Met Office has issued amber and yellow rain warnings for large parts of Scotland and northern England from today to tomorrow morning.

"For the south of the UK, we've got slightly ridged conditions and higher pressure bringing a more settled day with a fair amount of sunshine around," said the Met Office's spokesperson, Oli Claydon. "[It will be] dry for pretty much everyone in the southern half of the country and unseasonably warm as well.

"As we get into the very far north of England and into Scotland, that's where the difference starts, with some persistent and heavy rain across Scotland and most notably in western Scotland, where we're likely to see the highest totals."

A yellow rain warning covering much of Scotland, active from this morning to 6am tomorrow, could bring rainfall of 50mm-75mm in low-lying areas and close to 100mm on higher ground.

Within that is a separate and more severe amber warning, covering central Scotland, Tayside and Fife from 3am this morning to 6am tomorrow. The Met Office said as much as 150mm-180mm of rainfall could accumulate in the wettest spots.

Temperatures in south-east England could reach 24C today, with the Midlands and Wales also remaining sunny. The fine and settled conditions were expected to continue into tomorrow, though with slightly more cloud and hazy sunshine, and high temperatures more widespread across central and southern areas of England, Claydon said.

Rainfall in Scotland was likely to move northwards through tomorrow, with drier conditions expected and temperatures no higher than 13C today and 16C tomorrow.

180
Upper estimate of rainfall in millimetres in central Scotland, Tayside and Fife overnight



Simon Armitage
The poet laureate's voyage to the Arctic
Page 36



Environment

Ministers have 'misrepresented' UK climate advisory body, say scientists

Helena Horton
Environment reporter

The government has "misrepresented" the Climate Change Committee by wrongly claiming that it said Britain would need a quarter of its energy to come from fossil fuels by 2050, scientists have said.

In order to justify signing off new oil and gas licences in the North Sea, ministers said that the country would still require a quarter of its energy to come from gas in 2050, the year Britain is supposed to meet net zero.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) says this figure comes from the CCC, the government's statutory advisory body, which has strongly advised against licensing new fossil fuels.

Graham Stuart, the energy minister, has claimed on a number of occasions that under CCC forecasting, a quarter of energy demand in 2050 will be from gas.

He said recently: "Oil and natural gas are an essential resource as we transition to net zero. We need a more nuanced view of oil and gas. We cannot simply stop using them overnight, as the independent CCC has recognised. Even when we meet our net zero targets in 2050, we will still be using a quarter of the gas we currently use now, and we will still need oil for manufacturing essential products such as plastics, medicines and fertiliser."

DESNZ confirmed to the Guardian that the figure often cited by the department comes from the CCC's sixth carbon budget. When asked for their methodology, of how they arrived at this figure from the CCC's data, a spokesperson did not return a request for comment.

A spokesperson for the CCC told the Guardian: "The data is used from our sixth carbon budget, but they used their own calculation to get to that." It is understood the committee does not endorse the 25% figure.

Prof Michael Grubb from University College London and former member of the CCC said: "I cannot find any credible basis for the government's claim - not in the CCC analysis, nor in any serious analysis of net zero scenarios. The government must explain where it got this claim from and - speaking as a former member of the CCC - I'd ask specifically for the government to justify its reference to CCC analysis."

Prof Samuel Fankhauser from the Smith School at the University of Oxford said: "I have looked at the 6th carbon budget advice and could not find an explicit reference to oil and gas use in 2050. So the 25% figure must have been derived indirectly. Hard to know how this was done".

Bob Ward, from the Grantham Institute for Climate Change at the London School of Economics, said: "I can confirm that the CCC has never claimed 25% of the UK's energy will be generated from fossil fuels in 2050. It is difficult to know how the government has calculated this figure. It may have used the data table published by the CCC in 2021 which includes information about energy demand for every year up to 2050 in its balanced net zero pathway."

Sources at the CCC said they were conducting their own calculations and would be publishing these in due course, but that it was unlikely they would reach the same figure as the government.

A spokesperson for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said: "It is a matter of public record that the CCC's own data shows that by 2050 we will need oil and gas for around a quarter of our energy."

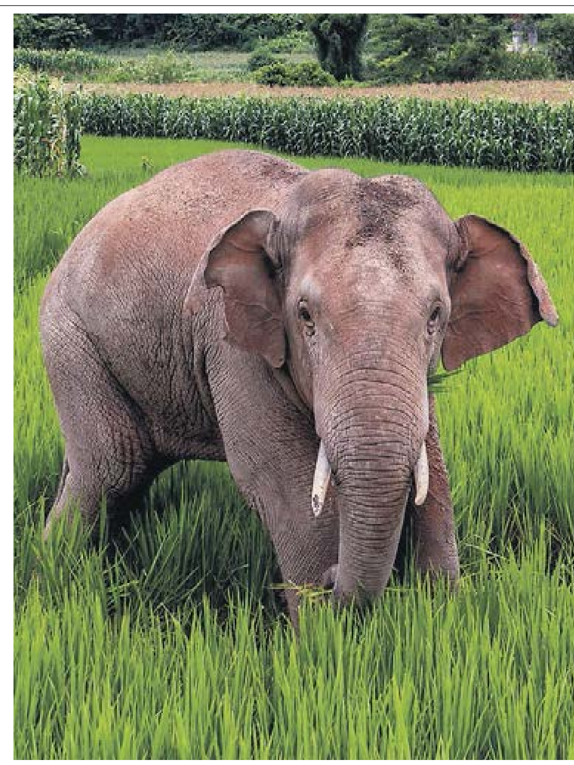




▲ *Preserved dung from 120 species, including the zebra, feature in the exhibition*

▼ *Tracey Lee's collection began with elephant poos, which are modest but plentiful*





Origin of the faeces Show gets to the bottom of animal dung

Patrick Barkham

A pile of something resembling chocolate raisins is displayed on what looks like a cake base. There's an artful assemblage of something the size and shape of oysters - and isn't that chocolate torte and sticky toffee pudding?

"They look like something from Bake Off," says Tracey Lee, an artist and former zookeeper, whose unique collection of animal excrement goes on public display for the first time this weekend. From the distinctive square nuggets of the wombat to the minuscule hand grenades of the death's head hawkmoth caterpillar, the produce of 120 rear ends makes up The Origin of the Faeces: Poo at the Zoo.

The exhibition, at Fusebox in Kingston upon Thames in south-west London, is the result of more than 20 years of collecting that began when Lee had to say goodbye to her favourite elephant, Geetha. One evening in 2001, Lee loaded elephants on to trucks to move them from London Zoo to ZSL's sister zoo, Whipsnade, so they could enjoy more space.

"When you work with these animals you fall in love with them. They become your family," she says. "You're with them from 7.30 in the morning until 6.30 at night. If they're sick you stay overnight with them. You're there on Christmas Day. As the truck left and drove out into the dark, I remember feeling really bereft. I picked up one of Geetha's poos, held it and thought, 'this is the last thing I have of Geetha'."

Lee was awakened to the artistic potential of number twos in the 1990s when, as elephant keeper, she collected elephant dung for use by the artist Chris Ofili, drying it in the zoo's boiler room.

When London Zoo's rhinos, Rosie and Jos, were also moved to more spacious zoos, Lee took another memento. "I picked up [Jos's] poo and put it next to Geetha's in the boiler room. And that's how it began."

Over the next two decades, Lee assembled her collection, drying out the stools and storing them in a friend's barn and in her allotment shed. Although now odourless and hygienic, the exhibits are a feast for the senses. Okapi manure looks like glossy chocolate raisins. Zebra dung is the same shape and size as oysters. The sizeable discharge of the Galapagos tortoise "looks like a giant tadpole or sperm with the tail on them", according to Lee, who two years ago moved from keeper duties to become ZSL's creative operative, painting zoo spaces, leaflets and signs.

> ***'I picked up one of [favourite elephant] Geetha's poos, held it and thought, "this is the last thing I have of Geetha"'***
>
> **Tracey Lee**
> *Artist and ex-zookeeper*

Elephant excrement is modest, but the pachyderms produce 10 or more chunks at a time. The strangest exhibit is from Zaire, one of London zoo's most cherished gorillas, who died three years ago. It looks like a giant kebab.

"She was an absolutely wonderful animal," says Lee. "She was very greedy and used to barge everyone out of the way to get the best bits of food - she did giant poos because she ate so much. She was a lovely, lovely lady."

The stinkiest - before being dried and made hygienic - belonged to the African wild dog. The smallest offering is probably the grape seed-sized poos of the Partula snail, which was extinct in the wild but is being reintroduced via captive-breeding programmes.

The exhibition already has more than 1,000 schoolchildren booked to see it.

Robin Hutchinson, founder of the exhibition organisers The Community Brain and the charity Creative Youth, says: "This is a brilliant exhibition because it gives visitors permission to talk about poo - and that's something that appeals to people of all ages. I'm especially keen to use Tracey's amazing exhibition to connect young people to the real plight of the natural world."

One mammal is not represented in the collection. "The only one I haven't done is human," says Lee. "Please don't ask - no way!"

The Origin of the Faeces: Poo at the Zoo, Fusebox, Kingston Riverside, until 28 October, free entry



A date with destiny I returned from the Arctic with a handful of poems and a sense of shame

Simon Armitage

I'm a geography graduate. Part of the attraction was the promise of exotic field trips, though in choosing "arts" geography I ended up monitoring bus-stop activity in Portsmouth city centre rather than measuring sand particles in the Atacama Desert or analysing soil samples in the jungles of Indonesia. Ironically, though, poetry has taken me to all points of the compass, from South Korea to Tasmania, to the interior of the Amazon rainforest, and this year to the Arctic Circle.

As someone whose inner lodestone is innately tuned to the gravitation pull of the north, this felt like a date with destiny, the trip coming about through conversations with the British Antarctic Survey (who run operations at both poles) and by way of a BBC commission to make four half-hour Radio 4 documentaries. So in the middle of the summer I packed a kitbag, including a multi-tool penknife that had been sitting in a drawer for 20 years apparently waiting for this invitation, and headed out.

Svalbard is a group of islands lying roughly halfway between the north coast of Norway and the north pole, with a landmass twice the size of Belgium. Spitsbergen is the main island, and Ny-Ålesund, at almost 79˚ latitude, is sometimes referred to as the world's most northerly community. An old coal-mining outpost, the remnants of a frontier settlement still scar the landscape and, even though the place is almost entirely devoted to scientific research these days, many of the 40 or so wooden huts and houses date back to that era. A heavyweight bust of the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, the first person to reach the south pole, sits in the middle of the "town", this being a staging post for various attempts to reach the very top of the planet, with only limited success.

Being so close, it was interesting to consider that in the entire history of our existence, human beings only set foot on the north pole a few decades before they walked on the moon.



▲ *Simon Armitage, the poet laureate, spent his time in the Arctic this summer going out with teams from the UK Arctic Research Station* PHOTOGRAPH: BBC





▲ Polar bears in Spitsbergen. Essentially marine animals, their hunting ground is getting smaller
PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE BLOOM IMAGES/ALAMY

The Summit

By Simon Armitage

When I met the glacier face to face
there was no coming together
of skin and ice,
just washy clouds and a weepy sky
floating upside down
in a silver lake, and the eyes
looking up from the water were mine.

It was hard slog
in a valley more like a Scottish Glen,
along hillsides more at home
in the English Lakes.
A day's trek up a narrow track
between harebell and birch
and to do what:

to say the arctic looks like this
or looks like that, to breathe
its cool breath then scratch a name
in the visitors' book
and give the glacier a human form:
tongue, body, mouth and heart…
In any event

I was too late.
Looking up from the milky pool
I saw the whiteness in retreat,
the bedraggled hem of the bridal train
heading into the heights
towards deeper winter and truer north,
trailing a stony path.

When I met the glacier face to face
there was no close encounter
of ancient snow and body heat,
just weepy clouds and a washy sky
hanging upside down
in a zinc-coloured lake, and the eyes
staring out of the water were mine.

Not counting the cruise ships that occasionally discharge parka-clad tourists on to the jetty, the population of Ny-Ålesund rarely exceeds a couple of hundred, and most residents are visiting research scientists. The UK Arctic Research Station is a long, low, rust-red hut that houses both laboratories and living quarters, and I set out from there every day with different teams, heading on to the water or inland.

This part of the Arctic is devastatingly beautiful. Sky-scraping mountains sweep down to the coast, and without buildings to act as reference points the scale is dizzying and disarming - you don't know if you're a David or a Goliath among the stony valleys, sharp arêtes and pointed peaks.

The sense of alienation and disorientation was intensified by the 24-hour July sunlight, but the most bewildering aspect of the whole expedition, for me, was the heat. The temperature hovered around 11C for five days, and for much of the time I wandered about in shirtsleeves, jeans and a pair of trainers. The thermal long johns never came out of the suitcase. Only the mountaintops were snow-covered.

Several glaciers calve into the water at the head of the adjacent fjord, and at frequent intervals the noiseless tranquility was broken by the sound of collapsing or rupturing ice. One evening we cruised among the floating debris, ice that fizzed and crackled as it melted, the floating ruins of what felt like some catastrophic event. The team onboard were examining sediment carried by meltwater, and even to the untrained eye the glacial retreat is glaringly obvious, the "tide marks" of former ice-levels striping the mountainsides, rivers of slurry cascading seaward. A second team were measuring microbial activity on the glacial plateaus. I went with them one day, expecting a trek across a hard, brilliant-white surface, but found myself tramping through miles of dirt-tinged slush.

The drip drip drip of climate change is the tick tick tick of a countdown to calamity. Across the entire polar territory the permafrost ain't so permanent or frosty any more, and structures - both natural and man-made - are starting to tilt and sink as the once frozen ground exhales its captive carbon into the air. Another day I watched a polar bear trudging along the coast. Vigilance is everything here; those creatures can kill and do kill, and it's odd to be flanked by field scientists armed with high velocity rifles, being protected from the very things they are trying to protect. Polar bears are essentially marine animals reliant on sea ice to hunt their prey, but this large male looked to be wandering in ever decreasing circles. I imagined him finally swinging from the North Star by a single claw, everything under his paws having melted away.

From Tromsø, on the Norwegian mainland but still within the Arctic Circle, I made another pilgrimage up a forested valley to encounter another glacier, and found it to be a carcass of darkening snow surrounded by a moat of its own weeping.

"Atlantification" seems to be the scientific buzzword for the way our temperate climate is extending into the polar region, drawing non-native flora and fauna towards higher latitudes, unbalancing complex and delicate ecosystems. It also feels like the right word to describe the relentless flow of plastics and other pollutants from south to north, and to explain why the stomachs of skuas and fulmars are full of cigarette lighters, condoms, fishing line, bottle tops and the like.

In 1880 the 20-year-old Arthur Conan Doyle sailed to the Arctic on the SS Hope. Ostensibly employed as the ship's surgeon, his diary from that journey is an unapologetic record of butchery, documenting the greedy slaughter of whales and seals and the shooting of polar bears as target practice. Words were my only trophies; I returned with a handful of poems. But as a member of a species inflicting such degradation and humiliation on the natural world, my shame and embarrassment were far greater.

I imagined the polar bear finally swinging from the North Star by a claw, everything under his paws having melted away

Simon Armitage

Poet Laureate in the Arctic will be on BBC Radio 4, starting Tuesday 10 October at 11.30am



▲ *Whales are already affected by collisions with ships off British Columbia, and a new LNG terminal will increase the risk* PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP THURSTON/GETTY

Dash for gas puts Canada's whales in danger from tanker traffic

Leyland Cecco

On a quiet summer evening last month, the crew of the Northern Expedition spotted a dark shape surfacing from the water off Canada's west coast. Earlier that day, crew members on the passenger ferry had made a similar sighting, and only narrowly avoided striking a humpback whale by ordering the ferry's powerful engines to be reversed.

This time, the momentum of the 150-metre vessel was too much. It struck the hulking cetacean, sending the dull, jarring sound of metal against tissue reverberating throughout the ship. The crew were devastated; the head of BC Ferries called the collision "disturbing". Nobody knows if the whale survived.

Collisions between large whales and even larger ships in this area have been growing more common as marine traffic increases, including a spate of deadly collisions this summer. Now, with the opening of a huge liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in 2025, which will transform the deep fjords of northern British Columbia into a crowded marine highway, researchers are warning of what is likely to be a "dire" increase in whale deaths.

The waters here have long been home to whale populations until widespread whaling nearly pushed species of humpback and fin whale to extinction. However, an end to widespread slaughter has allowed populations to rebound, and now fin whales - which can reach 27 metres in length and weigh as much as 70 tonnes - have been spotted crossing the freezing waters of the Kitimat fjord system. Humpbacks - 18 metres long and 40 tonnes in weight - have also been seen in record numbers.

But the plight of Moon, an injured humpback that travelled thousands of miles from Canada to Hawaii with a broken back, shows how the area's largest sea creature is increasingly clashing with marine traffic.

The LNG Canada project, initially envisioned as a way of moving large amounts of methane from Canada to Asia, has taken on new urgency as the war in Ukraine spurs countries to scramble for gas. A multibillion-dollar joint venture between Shell, Petronas, PetroChina, Mitsubishi and Korea Gas, the sprawling terminal rising outside the town of Kitimat will have two units to convert methane into a liquid form for shipping. When it opens, it will be able to export 14m tonnes of LNG a year, and that figure could rise to 28m tonnes if more processing facilities are added.

Company executives have said the project, which is also expected to add 4m tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually, will have a far smaller carbon footprint than similar projects globally. But critics say operations at LNG Canada will be the equivalent of adding nearly 870,000 cars to the road.

It will also present a threat to recovering whale populations by adding 350 ships to the Douglas Channel each year, or 700 total trips. In a new study, researchers predicted a 30-fold increase in strikes by large ships by 2030, which would result in the deaths of two more fin whales and 18 humpbacks each year than are already being killed. "We hope the models are wrong, because these numbers are really high," says Hussein Alidina of WWF Canada, a co-author of the paper. "But the team has done a lot of really diligent work in trying to make these models as conservative as possible - and we're still getting these outcomes."

These "unsustainable losses" would undo decades of conservation success. LNG Canada says it plans to have vessels travel at less than 10 knots within the fjord system, a speed experts say will lessen but not eliminate fatalities. But the company also says that operational speeds will depend on weather conditions and port schedules. Many scientists say a moratorium on vessel traffic in late summer, when the whales are most frequently spotted in the channel, would be the best measure.

"There's a chance that in the coming years, if things don't change, we might have to reassess the whole humpback and fin whale populations," says Janie Wray, the chief executive of the research group BC Whales. "A huge impact is coming."

World



◀ *Huge crowds gathered in Warsaw last Sunday in support of Civic Coalition, which is seeking to stop Poland's Law and Justice party winning a third term*

PHOTOGRAPH: CZAREK SOKOŁOWSKI/AP

Tusk campaign enters final stretch in battle for the future of Polish politics

Shaun Walker
Bydgoszcz

"I want this message to reach everybody in Poland," said Donald Tusk, speaking to a rally of supporters, gathered in a cavernous indoor sports arena in the city of Bydgoszcz. "This is really the last chance."

As a vicious, bruising campaign comes to its climax before parliamentary elections on 15 October, Tusk, a veteran of Polish and European politics, has sought to make this point with increasing urgency.

The rally was just one stop on a busy campaign trail for Tusk, whose Civic Coalition is seeking to prevent the nationalist, populist Law and Justice (PiS) government from winning a third term.

Crowds queued to see Tusk in Bydgoszcz, and at least 2,000 packed the hall to hear him speak, waving Polish flags and applauding regularly. Tusk told them the parliamentary vote would be a referendum on Poland's future as a state with democratic norms as well as on its place inside the EU.

"It will be crucial for Poland's future, for the future of our children and grandchildren," he said.

Tusk is perhaps Poland's best-known politician internationally. He was the prime minister between 2007 and 2014, when he left to become the European Council president. In 2015 his party suffered a surprise defeat in elections, with PiS coming to power.

Now Tusk is back. He has run a slick campaign designed to counter the stereotype that his is the party of the metropolitan elite. In Bydgoszcz, he referred to himself several times as a "normal person", and frequently talked of his grandchildren.

He is not a great orator but appears comfortable on stage and brings the gravitas of experience: he's done the job before, after all.

Tusk's key foe in this battle is the other major figure of recent Polish politics, Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS chair, who controls his party in a largely behind-the-scenes role.

PiS has used its eight years in power to try to reshape Poland, eroding democratic institutions, curtailing women's rights and demonising migrants and minorities. It has clashed with Brussels over the rule of law, leading to tens of millions in EU funds being blocked. At the same time, the government has increased welfare and social spending, winning support among many who felt the years after the transition from communism had been unfair.

Kaczyński is fighting to continue implementing his vision for Poland. His government has launched ferocious attacks on Tusk and his party, drawing from the populist playbook to claim the opposition represents foreign forces wanting to subjugate Poland. A large part of the PiS campaign has focused specifically on Tusk, with Kaczyński calling him "the personification of evil". Tusk is regularly accused of being a German or Russian agent on public television, which is staunchly pro-PiS.

> *'These elections won't be fair but there is still a chance to win'*
>
> **Adam Bodnar**
> *Civil Coalition candidate*

Tusk has tried to portray himself as a patriot, using a red-and-white heart as a campaign symbol and describing a huge rally of supporters in Warsaw last weekend as the "march of a million hearts".

Jarosław Kuisz, the author of an upcoming book on Polish politics, said: "Tusk's ambition is for the de-PiS-ification of Poland … but he is also fighting for his own legacy, for those years before 2015. He's been smeared day and night for eight years."

It has been the nastiest campaign most Poles can remember and both sides have portrayed a victory for the other as an apocalyptic scenario.

"I really think these elections are of historical importance," said Adam Bodnar, a law professor who spent several years as Poland's human rights ombudsman during PiS rule and who is now standing for election to the upper house of parliament as a Civil Coalition candidate in Warsaw.

"These elections won't be fair, but there is still at least a chance to fight them and win … This is the last chance to stop the construction of a semi-authoritarian system."

Most independent polls suggest the race is too close to call. A Kantar poll this week put PiS on 34% and Civic Coalition on 30%, meaning the ability to form the next government is likely to rest on the results of several smaller parties. One potential outcome is a hung parliament with no workable coalition and the prospect of another election.

The Kantar poll suggested Civic Coalition, with the leftwing Lewica and the centre-right Third Way, could put together a narrow parliamentary majority, but the margins are slim and the system used to translate votes into mandates is complicated, meaning there is still much uncertainty.

Jacek Karnowski, the editor-in-chief of Sieci, a pro-PiS weekly magazine, said: "I don't remember a

China prices
How Temu hooked bargain hunters
Page 42



What a cracker!
Swift parrot scoops bird of the year prize
Page 43

EU leaders and Hungary's prime minister clash over proposed migration laws

Lisa O'Carroll
Granada

EU leaders clashed again with Hungary yesterday after its prime minister, Viktor Orbán, insisted at a summit in Granada that it would not support proposed laws to deal with migration.

Poland also joined the protest, accusing Brussels of imposing a "diktat" on other member states regarding the proposed laws, which would apply in the event of a sudden refugee crisis such as in 2015, when more than 1 million people arrived in the EU from Syria and beyond.

Using provocative language on his way into the conference, Orbán described a deal without Hungary as an assault on his country because EU leaders had gone ahead with the laws without its or Poland's support.

He claims the laws, which have yet to be voted on, need unanimous backing, but the European Council has publicly insisted only majority support is needed.

"If you are raped legally, forced to accept something you don't like, how would you like to have a compromise and agreement? It's impossible," said Orbán.



▲ *Ursula von der Leyen downplayed objections by Hungary and Poland*

To avert a full-blown row that was threatening to overshadow the informal gathering in Spain, EU leaders agreed to remove a 119-word paragraph relating to the bloc's general pledges on migration from the text of a final communique concluding their summit.

Instead they adopted a "Granada declaration" on other issues including the overall strategy for the bloc in coming years, with the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, issuing a separate "president's statement" reaffirming the EU's commitment to the proposed laws on migration.

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, played down the Hungarian and Polish objections, telling reporters there was "broad support" at the summit for the proposed laws. "There is a very good chance that it [the law on migration] will make it over the finish line," she said.

"The principle is there to address the root causes for migration and then to work along the whole migratory route that people take," she said.

"The basic message is yes, we need regular migration."

Migration will return to the agenda in two weeks' time when the 27 leaders meet again in a formal capacity with decisions to take. But by then tensions with Poland may have eased, with this weekend's general election in the rear-view mirror.

Ahead of the EU are big decisions on a potential €250bn increase in budget to include funding of less-developed countries, and discussions on whether a bloc of more than 30 countries can actually function with unanimous voting on subjects such as foreign policy and taxation.

Arriving at the summit, the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, drew the first battle lines of the fraught arguments to come, also touching on the question of the most powerful jobs in Brussels by suggesting that in the new world, countries cannot expect to have their own commissioner.

"After all, you can't just almost always expand the government and invent new ministries," he said.

Scholz added that "a pragmatic solution" would also need to be found over the number of seats in the European parliament - a debate that may prove to be the most contentious given it could involve a reduction in numbers for some countries.

campaign where so much is unclear and the polls differ by such margins." He was still confident of a PiS victory.

The outcome could hinge on a few tenths of a per cent one way or the other for a smaller electoral grouping such as Third Way, which has polled at about 8-10% over recent months. Third Way will make it into parliament only if it passes the threshold of 8%; below that all its votes will be transferred to other parties, with a disproportionate amount going to the biggest party, which is likely to be PiS.

Lewica, Poland's main leftwing force, is another smaller party to watch, along with Confederation, a grouping of libertarians and far-right nationalists that opposes Poland's backing for Ukraine. Both have won support among younger voters, although Confederation has fallen in the polls since the summer and is now at about 8%. Part of the attraction of these parties for younger Poles is that they seem more in tune with their concerns than the two main parties led by ageing men - Tusk is 66 and Kaczyński is 74.

Weronika Sarnowska, a 31-year-old Lewica candidate in Warsaw, said: "Gen Z people are either frustrated and angry, or disengaged. They will tell you they've got nothing in common with either Kaczyński or Tusk." For most of those who do vote, "it's a protest vote", she added.



▲ *Donald Tusk and the mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski, at last weekend's 'million hearts' march in the Polish capital*
PHOTOGRAPH: BEATA ZAWRZEL/NURPHOTO/

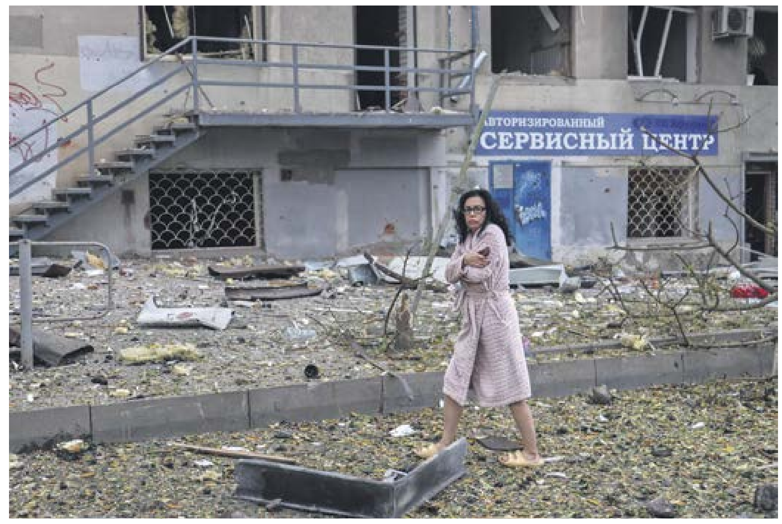
Nevertheless, Lewica and Third Way are clear that PiS is the greater threat. "We don't say both of them are evil because the only evil one is PiS," said Michał Kobosko, who is top of the Third Way party list for Warsaw.

If the opposition does well enough to install Tusk as prime minister, there will still be a difficult period of government ahead, as PiS has politicised many state institutions, and the PiS-allied president, Andrzej Duda, will have nearly two years of his term left with the ability to veto legislation.

If there is a path to a governing coalition for PiS or Civil Coalition, the election may be the end for one of the two men who have dominated Polish politics for two decades.

"For Kaczyński, if PiS lose it would be very difficult to rebuild this system again later, and if Tusk is the clear loser then it will be the end for him … This is their final battle," said Karnowski.

Additional reporting
Katarzyna Piasecka



▲ *A woman walks past debris in the aftermath of yesterday's deadly missile strike on a block of flats in central Kharkiv* PHOTOGRAPH: YAKIV LYASHENKO/EPA

'Russia terror' missile strike kills boy, 10, in Kharkiv

Luke Harding
Odesa

A 10-year-old boy has been killed and more than 20 people wounded after a Russian missile attack on a block of flats in the centre of Kharkiv, Ukrainian officials have said.

The strike on the city's densely populated downtown area took place at 6.46am yesterday. Rescuers found the boy's body under debris. Two Iskander missiles hit a block of flats, in what Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, called another act of "Russian terror".

The latest destruction came less than a day after a lethal strike on the small village of Hroza in Kharkiv oblast killed 52 people. It was the worst single death toll in the north-eastern region and one of the highest in Ukraine since the start of Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion last year.

The White House condemned Thursday's attack on a cafe and grocery store as "horrifying", while the British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, said it "demonstrated the depths of depravity Russian forces are willing to sink to", according to a Downing Street spokesperson.

In a briefing before the death toll increased, the White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, said: "Let's stop and think about what we're seeing: 49 innocent people who were killed by a Russian airstrike while they were shopping for food at a supermarket.

53
Ukrainian civilians killed in Russian rocket and air attacks on the Kharkiv region over two consecutive days

"This is why we're doing everything that we can to help Ukraine, to help the brave people of Ukraine to fight for their freedom … to fight for their democracy."

The UN's high commissioner for human rights, Volker Türk, said he would investigate. A field team would go to Hroza to talk to survivors and collect information. "The commissioner is profoundly shocked and condemns these killings," an Office of the UN high commissioner for human rights (OHCHR) spokesperson said in Geneva.

According to Ukraine's state emergency service, 26 civilians were wounded in the strike on Kharkiv yesterday, with 10 taken to hospital. Rescue workers removed rubble from the third storey of the block as fires burned in the square below..

"The murdered child is a boy. He was 10 years old. My condolences to his family and friends," Zelenskiy posted on Telegram. He added: "The rescue operation is ongoing. I thank all our soldiers who, despite everything, are moving forward, destroying the occupiers and bringing the return of justice to Ukraine closer."

Zelenskiy called the Hroza attack "no blind strike". He described it on Telegram as "a demonstrably brutal Russian crime - a rocket attack on an ordinary grocery store, a completely deliberate act of terrorism."

In his nightly video address, delivered while attending the summit of the European Political Community in Spain, said: "A deliberate missile strike on a village in Kharkiv region on an ordinary store and cafe. Russian troops could not have been unaware of where they were hitting. This was no blind strike."

Moscow did not immediately comment on the events in Hroza. It denies deliberately targeting civilians, but many have been killed in attacks that have hit residential areas.

Rustem Umerov, the Ukrainian defence minister, said: "The terrorists deliberately carried out the attack during lunchtime, to ensure a maximum number of casualties. There were no military targets there. This is a heinous crime intended to scare Ukrainians."

New Zealand's strict Covid-19 response prevented 20,000 deaths, report finds

Serena Solomon
Auckland

New Zealand's globally praised Covid response saved about 20,000 lives, research has found. A report published in the New Zealand Medical Journal looked at the impact of the nation's Covid-19 strategy, which included an almost complete international border closure for two years and strict lockdowns for days or weeks at a time.

The result was a Covid death rate per million people 80% lower than in the US. The report calls for preventive measures used during the pandemic, including mask-wearing in medical facilities, to continue to combat Covid and respiratory infections including RSV and influenza.

"I would hate for us to go back to really shrugging our shoulders and saying we don't care about [infectious diseases] or that there's nothing we can do about them. That's fatalism," said Prof Michael Baker from the University of Otago, one of the report's 16 co-authors.

The report says the impact of regular respiratory infections is similar to Covid-19. "It's just that pandemics get a lot more attention and justifiably so because they can be very devastating and disruptive," said Baker.

3,300

The number of deaths recorded in New Zealand that have been attributed to Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic in 2020

80%

The proportion by which the Covid-19 death rate per million people in New Zealand was lower than that recorded in the US

The 20,000 lives the report claims were spared is based on what New Zealand would have experienced if it had a similar Covid mortality rate to the US, where well over a million people have died, said Baker.

In New Zealand, there have been about 3,300 deaths . Predicted deaths relating to Covid will probably reach about 1,000 people in 2023, down from 2,448 deaths in 2022.

This compares with an estimated 500 deaths from influenza each year, deaths that largely did not happen when Covid measures were in place.

The report recommends improving indoor ventilation to decrease respiratory illness transmission and continued financial support to encourage people to self-isolate when sick. The New Zealand government recently ended a scheme that supported sick leave.

The report also recommends mask use in medical facilities and on public transport during periods of high infection rates for respiratory illnesses.

Revisiting some of the measures used during the pandemic might be difficult for some New Zealanders owing to the misinformation, according to Dr Siouxsie Wiles, an associate professor of medical microbiology at the University of Auckland who was not involved in the report.

"I think there was both this misinformation and disinformation trying to get people to actively forget what we experienced, even belittle what we achieved," said Wiles.



Running wild

Row over deaths of island's feral horses



▶ *Wild horses on the grasslands and, above, paddling in a lake on Sable Island, off the east coast of Canada*
PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH MEDILL/ REUTERS

Leyland Cecco
Toronto

On a narrow crescent of land off the coast of Nova Scotia in the Atlantic Ocean, hundreds of horses run free, galloping along the rolling dunes. Over the past year, though, nearly 150 of them have died, raising questions about the future of the famed feral herd of Sable Island.

Parks Canada said this week that a recent survey of the island, a windswept strip hundreds of miles off the coast, found nearly a quarter of the herd had succumbed to harsh winter conditions - more than double the annual average.

Sable Island, measuring only 12 sq miles, is known for its rugged beauty and treacherous conditions. Shifting sandbars, squalls, thick fog and strong currents have wrecked more than 350 ships there since the late 1500s.

Central to the image are the island's feral horses. Over the years, their story has been embroidered with myths, including that they were the survivors of shipwrecks. The truth is more prosaic, experts say: the horses, seized from Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia, were left on the island in the 1700s by a Boston merchant. Over centuries, they have managed a tenuous survival, with the population slowly growing over the past few decades. Their isolation means they have diverged genetically from other populations and the herd has had little human interaction, making them tantalising subjects for researchers.

In the 1950s, the Canadian government planned to ship the horses for work or slaughter. A public campaign was a "pivotal moment" in giving them public attention, said Dan Kehler, a Sable Island ecologist with Parks Canada. It worked, and the horses were granted full protection.

Each year, the Sable Island Institute uses volunteers to tally dead horses over two weeks. The recent die-off is partly attributed to the unforgiving life on the island. Still, the population has surged from 250 horses in 1961 to a record 591 horses last year. Kehler said: "We've had a half a dozen or so drops and resets in the population over the years and some of those are severe. But it is a reason to pay close attention to what might happen over the next few years to see if this is part of a trend."

Some have grown increasingly concerned that the horses are destroying the island's biodiversity.

> *'It's a population of abandoned animals under extreme stress'*
>
> **Ian Jones**
> *Biologist, Newfoundland*

Ian Jones, a professor of biology at Newfoundland's Memorial University, said: "These are farm animals that are basically keeping the island in a highly degraded state. From an animal welfare perspective, they are outside their suitable habitat and suffering terribly. A high percentage of them die every year … It's a population of abandoned animals that are under extreme stress."

Romantic depictions of the horses in literature and television had swayed the public, Jones said. "We need to restore remote islands' precious biodiversity … the scientific part is a no-brainer. And that matters, because more unique life forms have gone extinct on islands in recorded history than anywhere else."

Jones said there was "enormous excitement" among biologists when Parks Canada acquired the island, with many believing the park service's mandate to control invasive species meant the horses would finally be removed. But, he said, "through some pretzel-like logic, Parks Canada has decided the horses will stay".

Kehler said the organisation now considered the horses "part of the ecosystem", adding: "That they've thrived in the absence of human involvement suggests that they are adapted to the environment."

Jones was quick to point out he and his wife were horse lovers, and owned a pony. "But in Nova Scotia, there are these notions of 'wild' horses on Sable Island which must be maintained at all costs," he said. "And despite all rational input, we're leaving a mass of horses on a remote island that are just having a devastating impact."

Trump allegedly shared US nuclear submarine details with Australian billionaire



◀ *At the time of the former president's alleged conversation with Anthony Pratt, Australia was negotiating the purchase of nuclear submarines from the US*



▼ *Donald Trump, centre, sits with his legal team prior to the continuation of his civil fraud trial before the New York supreme court on Tuesday*

PHOTOGRAPH: SETH WENIG/AP

Martin Pengelly *Washington*
Sarah Basford Canales
Daniel Hurst *Canberra*

Donald Trump allegedly discussed potentially sensitive information about US nuclear submarines with an Australian billionaire, Anthony Pratt, three months after leaving office, it was report yesterday.

Citing a source with knowledge of the Australian's account to investigators for the special counsel Jack Smith, the US broadcaster ABC News reported an "excited" Trump had allegedly discussed "the supposed exact number of nuclear warheads [US submarines] routinely carry, and exactly how close they supposedly can get to a Russian submarine without being detected".

Smith has charged Trump with 40 criminal counts relating to his retention of classified information after leaving office. The former president also faces 17 criminal counts regarding election subversion (four federal, from Smith, and 13 in the state of Georgia) along with 34 concerning hush-money payments to the adult film actor Stormy Daniels.

According to the report, Smith did not include any information about the former president's alleged conversation with Pratt in his June indictment against Trump.

ABC News said Trump had spoken to Pratt at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida in April 2021. Pratt then allegedly shared the information about submarines "within minutes" of learning it, shocking a Trump employee who heard him.

Pratt, the ABC report alleged, went on to share the information with at least 45 people, including his own employees, journalists, foreign and Australian officials "and three former Australian prime ministers".

It was not clear if what Trump told Pratt was accurate, ABC News said. Nevertheless, investigators reportedly asked him to stop repeating what he had heard.

Pratt, whose corrugated packaging firm, Pratt Industries, is based in the US, reportedly told investigators he repeated what Trump had told him because he wanted to show he was advocating for Australia in the US.

At the time, Australia was negotiating the purchase of nuclear submarines from the US. The deal was sealed this year.

Trump and Pratt developed a relationship after Trump won the White House in 2016 and Pratt joined Mar-a-Lago, Trump's private club in Florida.

In 2019, Trump attended the opening of a Pratt Industries plant in Wapakoneta, Ohio, that was also attended by Scott Morrison, then the Australian prime minister. Of Pratt, Trump said "this man is No 1 in Australia, they say", adding in formal remarks: "We're here to celebrate a great opening and a great gentleman … one of the most successful men in the world - perhaps Australia's most successful man."

Pratt told reporters Trump would win the 2020 election. He did not.

On Thursday, ABC said Pratt told investigators he now supported Biden because he was "someone who tends to just side with the king".

Trump did not comment, but a spokesperson told ABC News: "President Trump did nothing wrong, has always insisted on truth and transparency and acted in a proper manner according to the law."

The former Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull told the Guardian Pratt had not spoken to him. "Trump did ask me in early 2017 why we were buying French rather than US subs," Turnbull said. "I explained it was important that they be a sovereign capability and we did not have the means to maintain nuclear powered submarines ourselves. Sovereignty was of the utmost importance to my government."

The office of the former prime minister John Howard said he too had not had such a conversation with Pratt.

The Australian government did not have an immediate response to the report. The offices of the prime minister and the foreign minister were contacted for comment.

Pratt has been asked for comment via his company Visy Industries.

Membership card proves Dutch king's grandfather was a Nazi

Ashifa Kassam *European community affairs correspondent*

The Netherlands' royal household has confirmed the authenticity of a Nazi membership card belonging to the Dutch king's grandfather, bringing an end to the decades-long suspicions that had swirled around Prince Bernhard.

Claims of ties between Bernhard, a German aristocrat who married into the Dutch royal family in the 1930s, and the Nazi party surfaced in the late 1990s after a Dutch historian said that he had found a copy of the card in a US archive.

Bernhard, who was prince consort until 1980 and who died in 2004, adamantly denied being a Nazi.

"I can swear with my hand on the Bible: I have never been a Nazi," Bernhard, then 93, told the national daily De Volkskrant in an interview. "I never paid for party membership. I never had a membership card."

He did, however, acknowledge that he had been a member of several Nazi military units, describing it as a necessity for men of his age at the time.

This week the former head of the palace archives, Flip Maarschalkerweerd, told the NRC newspaper that he found the card while cataloguing the prince's belongings.

The royal household confirmed to Agence France-Presse that the 1933 card was genuine.

Born a minor German prince in 1911, Bernhard von Lippe-Biesterfeld married crown princess Juliana after meeting her at the Olympic Games in Bavaria before the second world war.

He was known to wear a white carnation in his buttonhole - a fashion that would reportedly become a symbol of resistance after Bernhard helped organise the Dutch resistance from London, where the government and his mother-in-law, Queen Wilhelmina, were living in exile.

As the claims were confirmed, the country's main Jewish group and opposition politicians called for an inquiry into the prince's past.



▲ *Prince Bernhard in 1940. He had denied ever joining the Nazi party*

"That Bernhard was a member is not so much what caused the shock: most Dutch people had expected that by now," the Center for Information and Documentation Israel said in a statement. "But that he continued to deny it until his death weighs much more heavily for people."

King Willem-Alexander told reporters: "I imagine that the news has a major impact and that it prompts a lot of emotion, especially in the Jewish community."

"We have to see the past as it is, including the less nice parts," he added.

Additional reporting **AFP/Reuters**



▼ *Temu offers a seemingly endless array of items direct from suppliers, including a chicken-shaped lamp, novelty tents and barbecue tools*

China prices

With £5 trainers and £2 tents, cheap deals have made Temu a hit. But can it last?

Helen Davidson
Taipei

A chicken-shaped lamp. A toilet paper holder in the shape of a smiling velociraptor. An apron that catches beard hair during shaving. The list of wacky products goes on.

Among the more everyday items are cleaning products, smartwatches, novelty T-shirts, knock-off trainers and barbecue tools, but the common thread is that everything is incredibly, mindbogglingly cheap.

This is Temu, the latest Chinese shopping app to take the internet by storm and raise questions about provenance, competition and value.

Temu launched in the US in 2022 before expanding to Canada this year, then to several European countries, Australia and New Zealand in recent months.

It has quickly become a market leader, topping app charts in multiple countries, according to online monitors, and has captured more than half the US market share of its closest rival, the fast fashion giant Shein.

Its appeal is clear. In the midst of rising inflation around the world, Temu has attracted customers through its seemingly limitless range and incredibly low prices.

Men's running trainers cost less than £5, an avocado slicer is advertised for 89p, a well-reviewed outdoor tent sells for less than £2. The company earned itself the nickname "the price butcher" during Black Friday sales last year, according to the China Project - and the total value of products sold on the site has gone from US$3m (£2.5m) in September 2022 to $400m in April.

But it has also drawn controversy and rising consumer complaints. Temu is engaged in a US-based legal battle with Shein and has been accused of circumventing US anti-forced labour sanctions, and forcing suppliers into difficult conditions. There's also scepticism over how long it can sustain its business model.

"Right now, Temu does not care much about breaking even," says Ivy Yang, the founder of the Substack newsletter Calling the Shots and Wavelet Strategy. "Its primary competitive advantage is selling products as cheaply as possible. The platform is laser-focused on capturing customer mindshare."

The app and website are an assault on the senses, filled with promotions and offers in return for referrals. Some shoppers have used the rewards so successfully they have ordered numerous items without paying for anything.

The platform tells users to shop "like a billionaire", and then gamifies the experience with interactive prize wheels and reward systems, and exploits buyers' fomo (fear of missing out) with countdown timers and rolling lightning sales and deals.

To some, it's a turn-off. "They make the whole thing feel like a scam, even though I don't think it is," says one Australian shopper. "They kept shoving opportunities to earn more coupons in my face, but it always felt like you had to do just one more thing, refer one more friend, before you'd finally get the promised abundance. It felt like a digital poker machine."

Temu is also not immune to the general concerns about data security that have followed Chinese-linked apps for years. Analysts say it doesn't appear to collect much more user data than Amazon or eBay, but it isn't transparent about its security testing and data safety. The app was temporarily suspended from Apple stores earlier this year after Apple found it was misleading users about its use of their data, according to Politico. Apple says its transparency concerns were resolved in July.

In March, Pinduoduo - Temu's domestic Chinese equivalent - was suspended from Google Play stores after it was found to contain malware targeting Android machines. It was found to make about four times as many user data requests and permissions as Temu.

The scrutiny appears to have led Temu to distance itself from Pinduoduo and their shared parent company, PDD Holdings. Temu moved its international headquarters from Shanghai to Dublin this year.

Temu has been contacted for comment.

The platform runs in a similar way to Shein - offering a seemingly endless array of items direct from suppliers who make short production runs in response to customer interest. But it differs in that while Shein directly contracts suppliers to make the orders, Temu acts as more of a bridge, allowing suppliers to focus on their production run while the platform manages product listings, marketing and logistics.



▲ *Temu gamifies buying goods and tells users to shop 'like a billionaire'*

"Yet, this comes at a cost for sellers: they relinquish control over pricing, return policies, and long-term sales growth planning," says Yang. "Under this model, Temu's duration of payments to sellers is notably longer, and the cashflow pressures fall on sellers, not platform."

The rise of Temu (and Shein) has had major effects on the e-commerce industry. Yang says Temu's aggressive social media marketing spend "has inadvertently driven up the costs of ads inventory for everyone".

Sunandan Ray, the chief executive of the global shipping company Unique Logistics, says the huge volume of shipping is taking up more of the limited export space out of China, and driving up prices.

"Everyone who is importing by air is paying a higher price now because of the loss of capacity," he says. "To a certain extent it might be getting passed on to consumers, or it might be squeezing the margins of sellers."

Unlike general retail, which imports large consignments of product, Temu's logistics model for the US bundles individual customer packages together. Upon arrival the packages are accepted as individual imports and distributed by local postal services. The model has led to US politicians accusing Temu of circumventing *de minimis* rules that require customs declarations, inspections and compliance for shipments above $800.

In June a report by the US House select committee on the Chinese Communist party accused Temu of avoiding sanctions under the US's Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which restricts some Chinese goods linked to human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

"Temu is doing next to nothing to keep its supply chain free from slave labour," said the Republican senator and committee chair Mike Gallagher. "At the same time, Temu and Shein are building empires around the *de minimis* loophole in our import rules - dodging import taxes and evading scrutiny on the millions of goods they sell to Americans."

The report said 30% of small packages coming into the US were now from Shein and Temu.

Temu's meteoric rise has observers and industry insiders watching closely. For now it's still a startup - albeit a very large one - and whether it can maintain its low prices and global market share amid controversies is still a live question. Yang says if it wants to survive alongside giants such as Amazon, the company must improve the shopping and delivery experience, and ensure higher and more consistent product quality.

"If the merchant economic dynamics continue to disproportionately favour the platform at the expense of sellers, and Temu fails to foster organic repeat purchases, its current rate of subsidised growth is untenable."

Endangered swift parrot is Australia's bird of the year

Lisa Cox

The critically endangered swift parrot has been voted the 2023 Australian bird of the year.

Voters in the Guardian/BirdLife Australia biennial poll have used this year's competition to send a message that they want to see the habitat of the world's fastest parrot protected.

After ranking around 10th place during the early days of voting, the swift parrot emerged as a frontrunner this week amid a grassroots campaign to raise awareness about its desperate situation.

In the final 24 hours of polling, 11,171 votes were cast for the swift parrot, placing it 442 points ahead of the tawny frogmouth, which received 10,729 votes.

"This was definitely a concerted vote from people who were captivated not just by the birds themselves but their plight," BirdLife Australia's national public affairs manager, Sean Dooley, said.

Both the swift parrot and the tawny frogmouth had high profiles in this year's competition.

The swift parrot was in the headlines before the launch of the poll after Guardian Australia revealed a recovery plan – recently announced by the Australian environment minister, Tanya Plibersek – had not been shared with the experts who helped develop it and failed to adequately address logging of its breeding habitat in Tasmania or clearing of habitat on the mainland.

New population projections for the species by researchers at the Australian National University showed its decline was accelerating.

Even without the key threat of logging of its habitat factored in, the modelling found there would be fewer than 100 individuals in the population by 2031, with a mean population of just 58 birds, unless there was drastic intervention.



Dooley said while the bird of the year poll was an uplifting display of the love people have for Australia's birds, this year's result showed people were serious about protecting them. Four of the birds that made this year's top 10 are threatened species.

"The real thing about this – and this is why it's so tragic – is swift parrots are the most egregious example of how our nature laws are failing us," he said. "Because the situation could not be more stark or obvious."

Dooley said the clear and distinct threat to the survival of the swift parrot was the destruction of its forest home, particularly through native forest logging.

He said Australia had environmental laws in place that should address that threat but the exemption granted to forestry operations covered by regional forest agreements meant that was not happening and "we are watching this bird go extinct".

Australia has a biodiversity crisis and Dooley said the swift parrot's story was one of the worst examples.

"In a field of abject despair, it's the most distressing case of all because it's within our powers to fix it and we refuse to," he said. "I hope the government hears this message. People really care about these beautiful birds. They care about what happens to them."

Dooley said he empathised with the many supporters of the tawny frogmouth, which placed second for the third poll in a row: "To all the tawny lovers, hang in there. It will have its day. They're extraordinary birds. The fact they're still common and can be seen in every city in Australia is something to celebrate."

▼ *A late surge took the swift parrot past the tawny frogmouth, left, to win the biennial poll* PHOTOGRAPH: ROB BLAKERS/BOB BROWN FOUNDATION



Ex-lover loses high court bid to sue former king of Spain

Haroon Siddique
Sam Jones

A £126m lawsuit brought against the former king of Spain by his ex-lover cannot go to trial in England, a judge ruled yesterday.

Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn, a Danish businesswoman with homes in England, was attempting to sue Juan Carlos, 85, who abdicated in 2014, in the high court. Mrs Justice Collins Rice said the case was outside the court's jurisdiction.

Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn claims she suffered intrusive, intimidatory and adverse episodes since their relationship came to public attention in 2012 following an elephant-hunting trip to Botswana.

She alleged this included ordering the then head of Spain's national intelligence agency to harass and threaten her. Documents submitted to an earlier hearing alleged that a book about the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, was left in her home as a warning. Juan Carlos denied the claims made against him and had sought to have them struck out.

In her written judgment Collins Rice said her principal reason for not allowing the claim to proceed was "because it has not been brought against the defendant in his country of domicile, as is his default entitlement; and the claimant has not satisfied me she has a good arguable case that her claim falls within an exception to that default rule. That in turn is because she has not sufficiently established that the 'harmful event' of which she complains – harassment by the defendant – happened in England."

Collins Rice said even if she had concluded that the high court did have jurisdiction, she would have granted Juan Carlos's application to strike out Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn's claim because it did not apply with the rules for the drafting of a harassment claim.

Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn said she was "deeply disappointed" by the high court's decision, adding: "Juan Carlos has deployed his full armoury to grind me down and the reach of his power is immense. I am considering all options."

In a statement, Juan Carlos welcomed the ruling but expressed regret at "the outlay of energy and resources involved in the proceedings".



▲ *The Danish businesswoman Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn*

Feeding cows seaweed can cut emissions, say Swedish experts

Miranda Bryant
Stockholm

Sweden is one step closer to making it government policy to use methane-reducing cow feed additives such as seaweed after experts recommended further investigation into the area.

A report by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency into reduced methane emissions says development in the field has been "rapid in recent years" and is among "a number of new interesting additives with higher potential".

Among the cow feed additives cited in the report were the seaweed red algae and the chemical 3-nitrooxypropanol (3-NOP).

According to manufacturers, the daily feeding of red algae can reduce the methane emissions of meat animals by up to 90%. But, the agency said, more knowledge about its cultivation and use was needed.

The chemical 3-NOP, which has been fed to several cattle categories in Sweden and elsewhere, has been approved for use in dairy cows in the EU since February 2022. It can cut methane emissions by an average of about 30% in dairy cows, according to the report, and by 45% in meat cattle.

The discovery of the effects of feeding seaweed was first made by researchers in Australia. It works by preventing microorganisms in the cow's first stomach from producing methane. While some feed additives "appear to have significant potential", the agency warns that there is still uncertainty over the long-term effects and other factors preventing it from being used more.

Emma Carlén, a climate analyst at the agency, said: "We don't have very many other measures that can have this effect within current production level. But we also believe it's still quite new and there's still more research to be done before we can really come in with a clear policy measure."

The extra cost was a big constraint for farmers, she said, which is why they wanted to look at what financial support might be needed.

Fredrik Åkerman, the co-founder and chief executive of Volta Greentech, which is developing a land-based seaweed factory on the west coast of Sweden to make cattle feed, said its pilot projects across two Swedish farms so far had cut cows' methane emissions by 80% a day.

"We have developed a strategy that makes cows burp and fart less methane emissions," he said, adding that this level of reduction "is of course making a big positive impact on climate change and agriculture".

> *'We have developed a strategy that makes cows burp and fart less methane'*
>
> **Fredrik Åkerman**
> *CEO, Volta Greentech*

Unesco plans virtual museum to showcase stolen cultural artefacts

Jon Henley
Europe correspondent

Unesco, the United Nations' culture body, has announced plans for what it says will be the first virtual museum of stolen cultural artefacts, aimed at raising public awareness of trafficking and the unique importance of cultural heritage.

"Behind every stolen work or fragment lies a piece of history, identity and humanity that has been wrenched from its custodians, rendered inaccessible to research, and now risks falling into oblivion," said Unesco's director general, Audrey Azoulay.

"Our objective with this is to place these works back in the spotlight, and to restore the right of societies to access their heritage, experience it, and recognise themselves in it," Azoulay told a meeting of national representatives in Paris.

Developed with the international police organisation Interpol, whose database lists more than 52,000 cultural objects stolen from museums, collections and archeological sites, the $2.5m (£2m) virtual museum is expected to open in 2025.

Visitors will be able to navigate a succession of virtual spaces containing detailed 3D images of the artefacts, each accompanied by materials explaining their unique cultural significance, including stories and testimonies from local communities.

Unesco does not expect to be able to name the items that will make up the initial collection until shortly before the museum's opening.

According to the Antiquities Coalition, a US-based NGO, the most significant looted and stolen artefacts missing globally include a third century alabaster stone inscription taken from Awwam temple in Yemen between 2009 and 2011.

Also on the coalition's list are a seventh century BC ivory relief of a lion attacking a Nubian, stolen from the Baghdad museum in 2003; a green stone mask looted from the Maya site of Rio Azul, Guatemala, in the 1970s; and a fifth-sixth century figurine of Varaha taken from a temple complex in Rajasthan, India in 1988.

"These are objects that exist physically, but we don't know where," said Ernesto Ottone, the organisation's assistant director general for culture. "We will exhibit them virtually, in a space where we can really tell the story and the context behind them."

Ottone said the aim was to "help young people especially to understand that a stolen artefact is one that has been ripped from its community, but also to help recover stolen objects and promote the repatriation of cultural property generally".



The architect Francis Kéré's globe design for the virtual Unesco museum, which will incorporate 3D images of 600 stolen artefacts



A seventh century BC ivory relief of a lion attack that was taken from the Baghdad museum in 2003

Logically, he said, the museum's ultimate aim should be its own disappearance: "It's the opposite of a regular museum, whose collection will continue to expand. With this one, we hope its collection will shrink, as items are recovered."

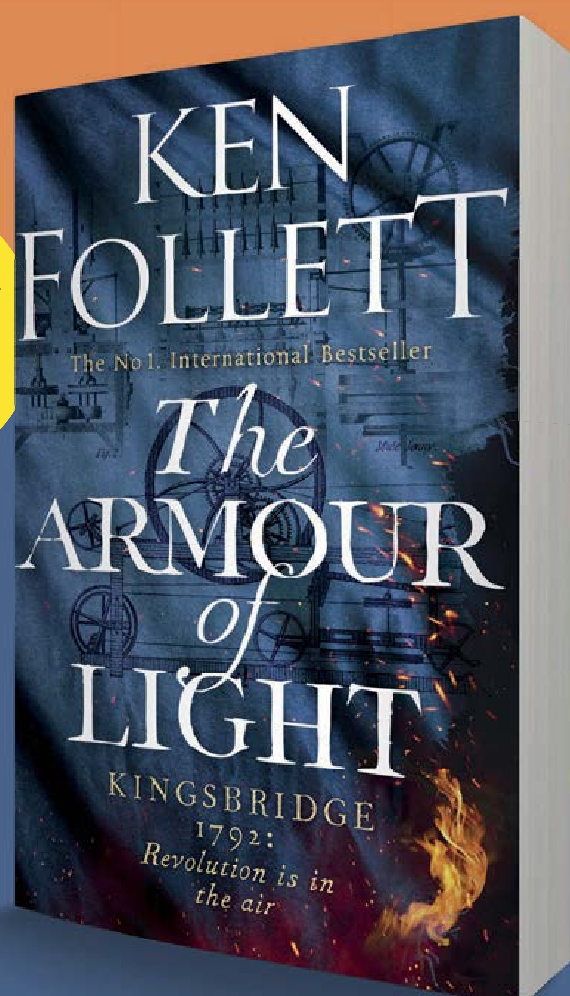
The project's architect, Francis Kéré, the 2022 - and first African - winner of the prestigious Pritzker prize for architecture, said the project was about "awakening the imagination". Cultural artefacts embodied "a value in their physical presence, but also a value to their communities ... that we cannot describe", he said.

The architect has designed an extendable virtual "ramp", contained within a globe connecting regions, countries, cultures and the 600 artefacts that will make up the opening collection, and has begun work with web developers to turn the concept into a digital reality.

Unesco's 1970 convention on prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and sale of cultural property urges signatory states to take measures to stop trafficking, which Interpol has said is increasingly the preserve of organised crime.

G Handpicked reads

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Business

Aviva shares jump on reports of potential foreign takeover

Julia Kollewe

Shares in Aviva, the UK's biggest insurer, jumped yesterday after reports that it could be the target of a takeover by a foreign buyer.

Its shares rose as much as 10% at one point before closing 5% higher at 407.9p, valuing the company at £11.2bn and catapulting it to the top of the FTSE 100 index. The UK insurance stocks Legal & General, Prudential and Phoenix also rose.

The markets blog Betaville and the Times newspaper reported that Aviva had attracted takeover interest from several international rivals. It has previously been linked with Germany's biggest insurer, Allianz, while Canada's Intact Financial Corporation and the Danish insurer Tryg are reportedly considering their options along with a US insurer, with a £6-a-share proposal mooted.

A City source told the Guardian there had been some discussions with suitors. There was no statement from Aviva or any of the other companies.

Intact, Canada's largest property and casualty insurer, has been on a buying spree in the UK, snapping up Direct Line's brokered commercial business for £520m last month. With Tryg, the largest general insurer in Scandinavia, the Canadian firm bought the RSA Insurance Group, the owner of the More Than brand, in a £7.2bn deal in 2021 that resulted in the breakup of the 300-year-old company.

Aviva offers pensions, life and health insurance, car, home and travel cover and has 15.5 million customers in the UK. It is the largest life insurer, with a 20% share of the market, and the No 1 general insurer, with a 10% slice of the market. In Canada, it is the second-biggest insurer behind Intact, with an 8% market share.

This means a deal with Intact could raise competition concerns. Allianz is the second-largest player in the UK general insurance market behind Aviva, and any combination would probably trigger a competition inquiry.



▲ *CEO Amanda Blanc transformed Aviva into a 'highly investible' firm*

Analysts at JP Morgan said Aviva's chief executive, Amanda Blanc, had transformed the insurer into a "highly investible company" but thought any takeover would be complicated.

Aviva's share price has risen by 50% since Blanc became chief executive in July 2020, though it is down 9.1% so far this year. Blanc has sold off most overseas businesses to focus on the UK, Ireland and Canada. In August, Aviva posted an 8% rise in operating profit to £715m for the first half of the year and raised its dividend.

Aviva bought the US insurer AIG's UK protection business for £460m last week, Blanc's biggest deal so far, and is the preferred bidder with partners to build a large cancer research and treatment campus in Sutton, south London.

The activist investor Cevian Capital sold down its entire stake in Aviva in May, saying Blanc and her team had done an "excellent" job in improving the company's fortunes. Analysts said this meant Cevian was no longer "causing mischief", and removed an obstacle to a potential takeover.

UK equities are relatively cheap due to a combination of factors, including a weaker pound, political instability and an exodus of companies and investors from the London market because of pessimism about the country's poor growth prospects in comparison with other economies.

The UK was on course to be the second-worst performer in the G7 group of large economies this year after Germany, the International Monetary Fund predicted in June.

Metro Bank rebounds on news of £600m funding offer

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

Metro Bank shares rebounded from all-time lows yesterday, amid reports the lender was sitting on a £600m offer from bondholders that could cover its looming funding pressures.

Regulators have been keeping a close eye on developments at the high street lender, which needs fresh investor funding and is exploring selling off up to 40% of its mortgage book to shore up its balance sheet and ensure it can continue to grow.

The bank's shares jumped as much as 30%, reversing a 25% drop a day earlier caused by fears it could struggle to source enough funding – including to refinance £350m worth of bonds as early as next autumn.

While the shares have lost half their value in the past month, Metro stock ended the day up 21% at 45.25p.

The recovery came amid news that the bank – which became the first new high street lender in more than a century in 2010 – has been sitting on an offer for a £600m capital injection from bondholders since Monday.

The Financial Times said Metro Bank had acknowledged but not yet accepted the offer, which could cover its funding needs and eliminate the need to sell off assets. The newspaper said bondholders – represented by the boutique investment bank, PJT Partners – first contacted Metro Bank's board on Monday, two days before news of its funding needs caused a drop in its share price.

PJT has been contacted for comment and Metro Bank has declined to comment.

The challenger bank has insisted it is "well positioned for future growth" and pointed to the fact that it swung back to profit in the first half of the year. However, the pressing concern is that Metro is operating at the edges of its capital requirements, which are set by regulators and are meant to offset mortgage risks and cover unexpected losses. Without fresh funding, it could be forced to slow or pause lending, ultimately harming its future profits.

It also needs to repay £3bn to the Bank of England. While Metro made an early payment worth £550m to the Bank in July, it will have to find money to cover another £1.9bn in 2025 – about the same time it needs to refinance its £350m worth of bonds.

40%

Proportion of its mortgage book Metro Bank is exploring selling off to shore up its balance sheet

Hopes of 'soft landing' as US adds 336,000 jobs last month

Callum Jones
New York

The US workforce added 336,000 jobs last month, far more than expected, as the world's largest economy remained resilient in the face of higher interest rates.

Nonfarm payrolls rose during September by almost double the rate anticipated by economists. Readings for July and August were also revised higher, with 236,000 and 227,000 jobs added, respectively.

Employment growth had been fading in recent months but remained resilient while the Federal Reserve battled to get inflation under control. This bolstered hopes the central bank would guide the US economy to a "soft landing", where price growth normalises and recession is avoided.

The closely watched monthly report is seen on Wall Street and in Washington as a key indicator of the health of the US economy. It excludes farms because of seasonal variation.

The headline unemployment rate held firm at 3.8% last month. The leisure and hospitality sectors helped drive the jump in payrolls growth, adding 96,000 jobs. Government employers also added 73,000 jobs.



▲ *Share indices declined on Wall Street as investors considered whether the Fed would raise rates*
PHOTOGRAPH: SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

The news comes as policymakers at the Fed prepare to meet at Halloween for their latest rate-setting meeting. They are expected to hold rates steady. When officials convened last month, they on average expected unemployment would rise to 4.1% next year, down from a median projection of 4.5% earlier this year.

The report "suggests the labour market is enjoying a soft landing", Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, said. "The surprisingly strong 336,000 increase in nonfarm payrolls in September adds to the evidence on real activity that the economy is holding up well despite the headwind from higher interest rates."

Benchmark 10-year US treasury yields hit their highest levels in 16 years after the release, and leading share indices declined on Wall Street, as investors considered whether the Fed would raise rates further.

Jerome Powell, the central bank's chair, has previously described a soft landing as plausible, but not his baseline expectation. He said factors outside the Fed's control, such as the car worker strike and the threat of a government shutdown, could knock the US economy.

Mike Bell, a market strategist at JP Morgan Asset Management, said the data would "reaffirm the market's conviction that rates will stay higher for longer. It also increases the probability of another rate hike from the Fed this year."

Business view
Nils Pratley



Aviva may be a candidate for a takeover, but buyers should beware of regulatory knots

A bid for Aviva? For about the first 20 years of the existence of this insurance mash-up - a three-way merger at the turn of the century, constructed around the old Norwich Union - its shareholders would have jumped at a chance to be put out of their misery.

Few FTSE 100 managements disappointed their investors so often, or paid themselves such obviously absurd bonuses. Aviva was eclipsed at every turn by the crisis-free progress of rivals Legal & General and Prudential.

Today, though, is a different matter. Amanda Blanc, chief executive since mid-2020, has completed a clean-up operation that took Aviva out of eight international markets and slimmed the operation to the UK, Ireland and Canada - places where it is either big or expects to generate good returns on capital, or both.

Almost £5bn was returned to shareholders from the disposals. Today's dividend promises - at least £915m this year and "low-to-mid single digit growth" thereafter - are also far more credible than in the past.

Why, then, is the group viewed as a takeover candidate?

Mainly because the fiddly disposal job has been done and the shares now look cheap on conventional metrics. Even after the bump in the share price on yesterday's rumours, the dividend level implies a yield of 8% - which ain't bad for a company that is number one in the UK in general insurance (cars and home, primarily) and is expected to keep generating excess cash.

The soggy stock market rating probably owes much to distrust of life assurance and pensions in general - the part where Aviva makes the other half of its profits. The underlying asset portfolios tend to contain large commercial property holdings, where UK valuations are currently weak. Alternative explanations include the unloved status of the UK economy, the UK stock market and financial services firms as a whole.

Yet a takeover bid for Aviva at a rumoured 600p would still be a stretch and a half. First, that would be a 50%-ish premium and any acquirer might do serious damage to its own valuation by paying so much. Second, German financial services group Allianz, the most plausible of the suggested names because it is so big, is already number two in general insurance in the UK, which would very likely mean a long and unpredictable competition inquiry.

Anything's possible, of course, and the persistence of takeover chat around Aviva this year suggests somebody, somewhere is at least wondering whether the arithmetic can be made to work. The best advice to Blanc and co, though, is surely to not get drawn into distracting games of tentative "what if?" conversations.

Selling large and highly-regulated insurance companies - Aviva is worth £11bn currently - is complicated and time-consuming. If somebody wants to slap a fully-funded, highly-priced bid on the table, fine, you are obliged to talk. But Aviva these days is not the ailing entity of old. It does not need a rescuer.



▲ *Shares in Aviva jumped after reports that it could be the target of a takeover by a foreign buyer*

> *Today's Aviva dividend promises - at least £915m this year and thereafter 'low-to-mid digit growth' - are more credible than in the past*

Wetherspoons back in profit for the first time since the pandemic

Mark Sweney

JD Wetherspoon has bounced back to profit for the first time since the start of the coronavirus pandemic three years ago, as consumers flock to the low cost pubs during the cost of living crisis.

Wetherspoons, which runs about 830 pubs across Britain and Ireland, reported a pre-tax profit of almost £43m in the year to 30 July.

It is the first time the pub chain has reported an annual profit since 2019, when it made profits of £102m. It announced a £30m loss in its previous results.

The start of the pandemic fuelled the first annual loss since the company was founded by Tim Martin in 1984. It made three consecutive annual losses - in 2020, 2021 and 2022 - totalling £230m.

Richard Hunter, the head of markets at Interactive Investor, said: "Wetherspoons continues to recover from the pandemic hangover which has left some stains on the business, but where progress is increasingly evident."

The company reported annual sales of £1.9bn, up 12.7% on a like-for-like basis, as cash-strapped consumers turned to its cheaper food and drink offerings.

Bar sales increased by 9% year on year, food sales soared by 16.7%, hotel room revenue went up by 11.8%, and sales for the pub chain's slot and fruit machine operations rose by 26.4%.

Martin said trading in new financial year has been strong, with sales up 9.9% year on year in the nine weeks to 1 October, but was more cautious about prospects for the full year. "As we said last year, perhaps the biggest threat to the hospitality industry is the possibility of further lockdowns and restrictions. The company currently anticipates a reasonable outcome for the financial year, subject to our future sales performance," said Martin.

Despite the return to profitability, Wetherspoons decided against reinstating a dividend for investors, which, combined with a less than bullish outlook for the year, led to its shares falling by 4% yesterday - making it one of the biggest fallers among FTSE 250 companies.

Wetherspoons also revealed that executive and non-executive directors took home £2.4m in total remuneration last year, slightly down on the £2.58m last year.

While no cash bonuses were paid to top executives, they received shares in the company's long-term incentive scheme.

The highest-paid director was John Hutson, the chief executive, who had a total remuneration package of £1.07m, his biggest pay packet since 2018. This year he will receive a 6% rise to his 638,000 annual salary, while staff will receive a 6.7% average rise.

Wetherspoons, which employs 42,000 people, said they received £36m in bonuses and share awards, of which 98.6% was paid to staff below board level and 83.4% was paid to staff working in pubs. This compares with £30m in its last financial year.

The company kept a tight control of costs, which have been hit by food, energy and labour increases. Employee costs increased 5.5% from £692m to £730m, while administration costs grew from £45m to £53m.

Hunter said: "While sales may have returned to something resembling normality, the pressure on margin and profit remains evident. Wetherspoons has been able to pass on some of the inflationary costs without diminishing its appeal but will be mindful this particular strategy needs to be reined in where possible."



◀ *The pub chain reported that bar sales rose by 9% year on year, while food sales increased by 16%*
PHOTOGRAPH: TOLGA AKMEN/AFP/GETTY

Data watchdog puts Snapchat on notice over 'failure to check AI privacy risks'

Mark Sweney

Snapchat could face a fine of millions of pounds after the UK data watchdog issued it with a preliminary enforcement notice over the alleged failure to assess privacy risks that its artificial intelligence chatbot may pose to users and particularly children.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said it had provisionally found that the social media app's owner failed to "adequately identify and assess the risks" to several million UK users of My AI, including among 13- to 17-year-olds.

Snapchat has 21 million monthly active users in the UK and is popular among younger demographics. The market research company Insider Intelligence estimates that 48% of users are aged 24 or under. About 18% of UK users are aged 12 to 17.

John Edwards, the information commissioner, said: "The provisional findings of our investigation suggest a worrying failure by Snap [the parent of Snapchat] to adequately identify and assess the privacy risks to children and other users before launching My AI."

The ICO said the findings of its investigation were provisional and Snap had until 27 October to make representations before a final decision was made about taking action.

"No conclusion should be drawn at this stage that there has, in fact, been any breach," the ICO said.

If a final enforcement notice is issued, Snap will have to stop processing data in connection with My AI, meaning it will have to be blocked for UK customers until an "adequate risk assessment". The ICO has the power to levy a fine of up to 4% of global turnover - Snap made $4.6bn (£3.8bn) in global revenues last year - or a maximum of £17.5m.

The My AI service is powered by OpenAI's GPT technology and its launch marked the first example of generative AI being embedded in a major messaging platform in the UK.

Snap said it was committed to protecting user privacy and was reviewing the provisional decision. "My AI went through a robust legal and privacy review … We will continue to work constructively with the ICO to ensure they're comfortable with our risk assessment procedures."



▲ *About 18% of UK Snapchat users are estimated to be aged 12 to 17*



Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves on a charm offensive at the London Stock Exchange last month
PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

‘A party for all businesses’

Why bosses are lining up to attend Labour conference

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

The Labour party conference, it is fair to say, has not always been a hot ticket for company bosses. This year, after events in Manchester rounded off a chaotic period for business relations with the Conservatives, things are different.

As the Labour party descends on Liverpool's Albert Dock for its annual get-together this weekend, insiders say so many companies are clamouring to attend that many will not get in. Labour's "business day" – at a conference the Financial Times is jokingly referring to as the "Liverpool Davos" – has twice as many firms involved as last year , with Goldman Sachs, Boeing and Amazon sponsoring events, and is still oversubscribed.

"We could probably sell it out all over again to be honest – we have a waiting list as long as the attendees," says Jonathan Reynolds, the shadow business secretary. "We can't get rooms big enough to hold the events. But that's a problem we'll take.

"Genuinely, people see us as the better option compared with a fifth Tory term. They see the risks to economic stability and their own businesses it would have."

Before the Tory conference in Manchester, Labour was almost 20 points ahead in opinion polls.

The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, after cancelling the HS2 high-speed rail line from Birmingham to Manchester in his conference speech, has drawn an angry response from industry, having already upset bosses just weeks earlier by watering down the UK's net zero commitments. By contrast the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, appearing on platforms with Tony Blair, has left a marked impression on bosses, senior industry figures say, amid hopes in the City of London for a more serious approach to government.

On the sidelines of the Tory bash, lobbyists for big hedge funds, banks and private firms spoke highly of Labour's business team – Reynolds and the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves – and told a Sun journalist they could not get a seat at a Labour business dinner because demand was so high.

Paul Drechsler, the chair of the International Chamber of Commerce, is among executives heading to Liverpool after a disappointing trip to Manchester. He says there was a feeling at the Tory event of a party out of control, "totally preoccupied with their own internal machinations".

"That's not been good for the economy," says Drechsler, a former president of the CBI lobby group who was once David Cameron's "skills tsar". "The one thing self-evident in Manchester is there isn't a Conservative party left in this country: there is a collection of parties riding on the back of their funding and banner, with totally different views on how the country should be run – from 'bankrupt it as quickly as possible' to 'bankrupt it as slowly as possible'."

For many bosses the 2016 Brexit referendum triggered a Tory transformation from the party of business to that of – as Boris Johnson was reported to have said – "fuck business", with the resulting political and economic instability hitting business investment in Britain. However, Labour was hardly a natural alternative. Industry bosses lobbied hard before the 2019 election against Jeremy Corbyn's plans for higher business taxes and renationalisation.

Starmer has mostly ditched them, positioning Labour as "pro-business, pro-worker". But there is scope for tension, as the tack to the centre unsettles his leftwing MPs and trade union backers.

The trio holding the keys on business policy – Starmer, Reeves and Reynolds – have pushed Labour's safety-first approach while the Tories implode. Several policies have been watered down, aiming to showcase economic credibility, including Reeves rowing back on plans for £28bn of borrowing to invest in green jobs and industry. However, Starmer has been warned too much caution could damage Labour's prospects at the next election.

Reynolds says the main pitch to business is Labour's newfound internal stability, compared with the Tories' infighting and chop-change approach to politics. But there are City-friendly policies, too, such as a relaunched industrial strategy, changes to business rates and the apprenticeship levy, and "improvements" to UK-EU relations.

> **'The Tories have been preoccupied with their own internal machinations. That's not been good for the economy'**
>
> **Paul Drechsler**
> *ICC chair*

Reeves has been on a breakfast-time charm campaign, meeting bosses at all but a handful of the FTSE 250 group of firms listed on the London stock market. Recent meetings have included BlackRock, Goldman Sachs and Toyota. Bosses making the trip to Liverpool will include the CEOs of Deliveroo, the builder Taylor Wimpey and the insurer Lloyd's of London. There will be a handful of private dinners for Labour's top brass with company bosses and a business forum followed by a sold-out drinks reception hosted by Bloomberg.

Hamish Sandison, chair of the party's affiliated business membership group Labour Business, says the world of industry is changing. In an age when some Tories rail against the growth of "woke capitalism", he says Labour is in tune with the business mainstream. "The Tories say they're the party of business but it's all hedge funds … They are still a party of business – but only a certain part. Labour aspires to be a party for all businesses."

Demonstrating internal change has not just opened doors in the City, but also the chequebooks of super-rich donors who largely kept away during Corbyn's leadership. The party has built a sizable pre-election war chest in recent months, raising almost £9m from individuals and companies – more than six times the total during the 2019 election year. Michael Levy, the chief fundraiser under Blair, is helping. "There has absolutely been a complete sea change," he says, suggesting donors see Starmer as a "grownup with maturity" and Reeves as an experienced former Bank of England economist.

"They say to me: 'What's happened to our country?' They're upset, confused and really just unhappy. They want change."

The prominent financier Stuart Roden, best known for his time as chair of the London hedge fund Lansdowne Partners, has donated £180,000, while the former boss of Autoglass Gary Lubner has pledged up to £5m to help Labour build its "capacity and capability" before the election. Sir Victor Blank, the chair of Lloyds TSB during the 2008 financial crisis, is donating again, having previously given during the New Labour and Miliband eras.

Nick Razey, a former Cable & Wireless executive who is donating large sums to Labour, says the the biggest wish is to remove the Tories from power. "I'm a capitalist obviously. I've made money out of business, but I'm a consistent Labour supporter," he says. "I was actually giving money to charities and rewilding projects and so on, but it occurred to me my money would be better spent on getting Labour elected. For every £1 you give to charity, a decent government with proper taxation could do a hundred times that."

Money

Scams special

'I lost £240,000': victims of fraud share their stories



Losing money to a scam can be devastating. **Anna Tims** and **Rupert Jones** speak to victims of fraud – and share top tips to avoid being duped

Scammers continue to find new ways to con people into handing over their cash, with some types of fraud, such as identity theft, recently hitting all-time highs.

On a daily basis, Guardian Money hears from people who have fallen victim to criminals and are desperate for our help. The sums involved can range from less than £100 to six figures, and, in some unfortunate cases, people have lost their life savings.

According to the banking trade body UK Finance, fraudsters stole more than £1.2bn from UK consumers in 2022 – equivalent to more than £2,300 every minute – which the organisation described as "a staggering figure".

The cost of living crisis has made some financially squeezed individuals more susceptible to approaches by scammers, many of whom offer fake deals and discounts in an attempt to steal personal and financial information.

Below are just a couple of examples of people who have recently come to us for help. And here, and over the next few pages, we highlight some of the scams doing the rounds and how to avoid them, and what you should do if you think you've been caught out.

'I lost my retirement money when buying a house'

When the completion date for Andrew White's* house purchase was getting near, he received an email from his conveyancing firm advising him when and where to pay the deposit. He subsequently transferred the funds to the nominated bank account.

It was only when he emailed the company to confirm it had received the money that he discovered that the sum had not arrived.

A scammer had hacked into the email exchanges between him and his solicitor and, messaging from the same email address, had directed him to pay the funds into a bogus account. He lost £240,000.

White is one of a growing number of property buyers who have been scammed out of their deposits after an email hack.

Conveyancing fraud, also known as "Friday afternoon fraud", has accelerated since the Covid pandemic, according to property insiders, as solicitors and clients increasingly liaise remotely.

Hackers tend to strike on a Friday afternoon because it means victims may not realise they have been scammed until the law firm reopens the following Monday.

They hack into the email account of either the conveyancing company or the client and intercept correspondence about a property purchase.

If it is the company's account that has been compromised, the fake messages are often sent from the solicitor's actual email address. If the client's account has been targeted, the fraudster creates an email address almost identical to the solicitor's and copies the headers and footers used in the genuine correspondence.

Posing as the solicitor, they then direct victims to pay their deposit into an account controlled by the scammer. Typically, by the time the fraud is discovered, the money has long vanished.

Law firms routinely inform clients that bank account details will never be provided via email. However, these warnings are often tucked away in introductory packs received weeks before the completion day and in the footers of emails, where they are easily overlooked.

> ***'The solicitors have refused to accept that their email systems have been compromised'***
>
> **Andrew White**
> *Fraud victim*

White, who has used the same solicitors' firm for family business for many years, says he had no reason to suspect that anything was amiss, even though the company name on the bank account provided differed from the law firm's. The emailed instructions bore the name and genuine email address of the solicitor handling his purchase.

White made nine payments over 10 days, since his bank, HSBC, would only allow him to transfer a maximum of £25,000 a day. He claims that the bank did not question the uncharacteristic transactions.

"I lost my entire retirement money through buying a house to be closer to my family," White, an RAF veteran, says.

"The solicitors have refused to accept that their email systems have been compromised and insist that a short sentence at the base of their emails alluding to fraud is sufficient to negate any responsibility on their part."

White was eventually refunded after the Financial Ombudsman Service decided that HSBC had not sufficiently questioned the multiple payments.

Under the industry's contingent reimbursement model (CRM) code – a voluntary code outlining when defrauded customers should get back their cash – banks have promised to refund scam victims who have not been unduly negligent.

An HSBC spokesperson says: "Protecting customers from unscrupulous fraudsters is a priority for us. The customer has been reimbursed in full."

Top tips for avoiding becoming a victim of conveyancing fraud include:

- Consumers should beware of messages purportedly from a conveyancing firm making unexpected changes to payment dates or details, or claiming to be from a new member of staff.
- Only use bank details provided by your conveyancing firm on paper in person. If you receive an email claiming the account details have changed, call the firm using the number on its website or visit to check it is genuine.
- Watch out for ungrammatical English or oddly phrased wording in emails.
- Make large transactions in a bank branch if possible, and ensure to check that the account name matches the law firm's name and the name associated with the account number.



▲ *It is often safer to make large transactions in a bank branch*

'I'm always wary of scams. I can't believe this has happened to me'

A businesswoman has been left £4,900 out of pocket after being conned by scammers pretending to be from the Halifax bank. She says they even used "exactly the same" telephone hold music.

In July, Julie Hall* received a text message purporting to be from Halifax. It which was among a thread of genuine messages and said her card had been used at an Ikea store and asked if she

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Fantasy house hunt
Homes for sale with a blue plaque
Page 53





▲ *Fraudsters stole more than £1.2bn from consumers in 2022 - equivalent to more than £2,300 every minute* PHOTOGRAPH: 10,000 HOURS/GETTY IMAGES

recognised the transaction. She said that she did not, and another text came asking her to contact the bank via the number given to discuss the matter.

She says she called the number "and it was answered in the exact same way Halifax answers". Hall, from Eastbourne in East Sussex, says the man talked about her account, and also knew she had accounts with Barclays and Chase.

"He said my account had been compromised and I would need to move the money to a safe account so they could shut this one down and give me a new account number."

The man first asked Hall to transfer £5,027 from her Chase account. She tried but Chase would not allow the payment. The man told her to transfer a lower amount, which she did.

She transferred a little over £5,300 from her Barclays business account into her Halifax account to move across to the "safe" account.

Hall says: "I used my internet banking to do this, with codes coming from Halifax to my landline, making me believe they were genuine. I then transferred £4,900 from Halifax to the 'safe' account." It turns out the money was going to an account operated by a money transfer service.

The man then started to become annoyed with Hall. She became suspicious and ended the call.

She phoned Halifax and explained what had happened but says staff were not helpful. She then phoned Chase.

Hall says: "They were extremely helpful … and said they would try all they could to get the money back. Within a few days, I had all the money lost from Chase back in my account."

Hall complained to Halifax but the bank told her it would not be refunding any of the money, though it gave her an "apology payment" of £80 to recognise some failings in the way her case had been handled. She says: "If Chase can do it [give her the funds back], I don't see why Halifax can't."

Hall says the man on the phone sounded authentic and, when she asked him to confirm who he was, "he gave perfectly believable credentials". She adds: "I'm always really wary of scams. I can't believe this has happened to me." Hall says the family had been saving to go to New Zealand, and the money that was taken was part of that.

Halifax says that as this payment was made via "open banking", as opposed to via the banks' faster payment system, it is not covered by the CRM code.

A Halifax spokesperson said: "We have a great deal of sympathy for [Hall] as the victim of a scam. We carefully review the individual details of each case reported to us and then consider a number of factors, including whether the bank could have taken any additional steps to help prevent the scam taking place, and also if our customer took reasonable care when making payments.

"In this case, while the initial payment was not out of character, based on [Hall]'s previous account activity, our fraud detection systems immediately blocked the subsequent attempted payments, as the pattern of transactions became more unusual."

** Names have been changed*

> *'He said my account had been compromised and I needed to move the money to a safe account'*
>
> **Julie Hall**
> *Fraud victim*



▲ *Lloyds bank says there has been a 74% rise in the number of its customers reporting car-selling scams this year* PHOTOGRAPH: SJALE/GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Too good to be true?

Dos and don'ts when faced with six common scams

From fake retail websites to missed delivery texts, there are steps people can take to help avoid falling victim, writes **Hilary Osborne**

Fake retailer websites

Where there's a news story, there's a fraud. In August it was headlines saying that Wilko had gone into administration and was set to shut stores that gave criminals an opportunity. Just days after the retailer collapsed, there were at least 10 websites claiming to offer discounted goods, many of which had been designed to look official.

Santander says these and other scam shopping sites resulted in more than 5,000 complaints from its customers alone in August, with people losing an average of £37.

How to avoid: Check the website address of any link, and think twice if items look very cheap. Scam sites often give you just a few minutes to complete your purchases. Legitimate retailers don't do this.

WhatsApp messages

You get a message claiming to be from a relative, often a son or daughter, who has lost their phone and is using a friend's. There might be some smalltalk, but eventually they say they need help to pay for something and ask you to transfer the money to the account that needs paying. This is the fraudsters' account, and your money has gone as soon as you OK the payment.

How to avoid: Never pay anything until you have spoken to the relative who is asking for money. If it really is them, they will find some way to call you.

Missed delivery texts

A text - or sometimes email - arrives telling you that a courier is attempting to deliver a parcel, but you need to pay a fee or rearrange collection. It offers a link to a website where you can do this, or an app to download. The number could be "spoofed" and look like it belongs to a legitimate company.

Sometimes the scammers are attempting to get you to install an app that contains spyware, which they can use to collect details including your passwords. Sometimes they seem to be looking for just enough details to call you and pretend to be from your bank's fraud department. They will then try to talk you into moving money into a new account for safety.

How to avoid: Examine the URL of any link you click on to check if it is genuine - there will usually be something that gives it away. Do not download apps. If you are expecting a parcel, go directly to the website of the courier or retailer and track it there. If you are not expecting a parcel or any kind of tracked mail, your best bet is to ignore the message. You can forward suspicious texts to 7726 - it goes to your mobile provider, which registers it as spam.



▲ *One website asks for £17.50 for a Ulez charge that costs £12.50 direct*

Paid-for government sites

You need to apply for a global health insurance card (Ghic) or update your driving licence, or you want to check whether you have won on the premium bonds. You arrive on a webpage that offers to do just that - but there's an extra charge, maybe upfront or in the form of a subscription fee that you inadvertently sign up to. One website collecting payments for the Ulez scheme charges £17.50 for something that costs £12.50 direct.

How to avoid: The listing on Google may say "sponsored" above the website address and title. This is how they get to appear high in the results. If you have clicked through, scroll right down to the bottom - in the small print it may spell out it is not an official site or affiliated to one and will charge an extra fee for its "service". If you can't find that, check for a terms and conditions page, which should tell you who you are doing business with.

Car-selling scams

Fraudsters post adverts on online marketplaces for vehicles that don't exist and prey on people who want to buy. They will typically come up with reasons why you can't view the car, and at the same time rush you into transferring a deposit, or even the full payment, to secure the sale. And then they disappear, taking your money with them.

Lloyds says there was a 74% rise in reports of this type of scam by its customers in the first half of 2023, and that those affected lost an average of £998 each.

How to avoid: Don't pay anything until you have seen the car in real life. Or use an AA inspector to check it out - this costs £142, which is less than you could stand to lose in a scam. Pay using a credit or debit card rather than a bank transfer, as they have protections built in.

Student money mules

As the new university academic year begins, a warning has been issued about students being recruited as "money mules", people who allow their bank details to be used to process criminals' cash - a type of money laundering. This week Barclays said cases of student money mules rose by 23% last October, so this month could well see a similar spike. In many cases, people are attracted by promises of gifts or cash in return.

How to avoid: Criminals will often set up fake profiles on social media and dangle the opportunity to earn some quick and easy cash. "Always be wary of people reaching out to you online with too-good-to-be-true opportunities, get-rich-quick schemes and requests to pass money through your bank account," Barclays says. Ultimately you could end up with a criminal record.



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Illegal streaming

How watching puts you at risk of fraud or police visit

Rupert Jones

People who illegally stream movies, sport and TV shows online are being warned they are at risk of having their bank accounts emptied or their identities stolen.

A big awareness campaign has just been launched to highlight the various dangers associated with using illicit streaming services to watch paid-for content.

But, say experts, it is not just the fact you could find that the credit card you used to sign up to a "service" or pay to watch the big game has been used to make multiple fraudulent transactions, or that criminals may install malware, access your bank account or steal personal information.

The campaign also points out that people who watch pirate content can be visited by the police at their homes, and can even be prosecuted and sent to prison.

The cost of living crisis has seen growing numbers of people hunt around for free or cheap ways of viewing the latest films, football matches and hot TV shows.

Now a campaign called BeStreamWise, with the slogan "Illegal streams let criminals in", has gone live.

It includes a website (bestreamwise.com), plus posters on London Underground and at other locations, and a short film online that has already been viewed more than 500,000 times. The film shows a man watching football on a laptop as sinister hands reach out from the screen to grab his bank cards, account numbers and other private information.



▲ *The BeStreamWise campaign is highlighting some of the dangers*

The campaign has the backing of organisations and companies including the government's Intellectual Property Office, Crimestoppers, the Federation Against Copyright Theft (Fact), ITV, Sky and the Premier League.

There are a number of ways of accessing unauthorised content, from free streaming sites to apps, sticks and modified boxes. However, the campaign says you are at risk of getting malware and being scammed or hacked.

The British Association for Screen Entertainment (Base) says: "Our research has shown that those who view films, TV shows or sports fixtures through illegal streams increasingly report serious repercussions such as viruses, scams and personal data breaches."

The risk of being exposed to fraud and data theft "increases significantly" when users hand over their credit or debit card details to pay for illegal content, says the campaign. It adds that a recent study found that of 50 illegal streaming sites analysed, 90% were classified as risky.

It is worth being aware you could get a knock on the door from the authorities if the service you use finds itself under investigation.

In January this year, officials from Fact and the police visited homes across the UK to issue warning notices to people ordering them to stop streaming immediately or risk prosecution. More than 1,000 individuals had been identified after raids by West Mercia police against a UK-based illegal streaming service.

Consumer champions

Miles Brignall



I'm still waiting for Virgin Money to look at my claim

In December 2022, I used my Virgin Money credit card to pay £500 towards an £18,500 order for a large quantity of insulated concrete blocks. These were to be used in the self-build construction of my house. The rest of the money was paid by bank transfer.

Six months later, and before the blocks had been delivered, I was informed that the supplying company, Insul Hub, had ceased trading and was going into liquidation. I was told the firm was "unable to meet existing obligations" to its customers.

As a result, I submitted a section 75 claim to Virgin Money. After 10 weeks of hearing nothing, I called Virgin Money, only to learn that the claim had not even been passed to a claims handler, and that there was no timescale for this to happen. I made a formal complaint but have heard nothing more.

It is now three months on and Virgin Money cannot (or will not) give me an estimate as to when they will look at the claim. In the meantime I am out of pocket by £18,500, which I was under the impression (perhaps falsely) that the section 75 process would protect me from. Can you help?
AH, *by email*

Your case shows why it is so important to use a credit card when making big purchases for items yet to be delivered, particularly from small firms. Had you paid the whole sum by bank transfer, you would have lost the lot.

Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 allows users to hold the card provider jointly liable in the event a company fails to deliver items or if there is some other breach of contract. Consumers don't have to buy the whole item using their credit card – they just have to spend at least £100 of the total sum on the card to gain the



▲ *Credit card providers are often slow in dealing with section 75 claims*

protection for the full amount. Users have to pay the company directly – not via an agent – and the total price can't be above £30,000 to be covered.

That said, getting the banks to pay such claims is often a long-winded and slow process. Even after I sent Virgin Money your letter, it still took a further five weeks for the company to process it. Happily, this week it said it had finally approved your claim and will refund you the full £18,500.

Virgin Money has also made an extra payment to apologise for the fact that it failed to deal with your complaint in a timely manner. You are very relieved the matter is resolved and you are to get the money back.

Avis refuses to refund me over excess insurance

Last summer I hired a car from Avis in Montenegro. When I picked up the car, I was asked if I wanted the additional excess insurance, and I said no, as I had already bought some from a third party. They then told me they needed to take the car hire deposit in two separate credit card payments due to transaction limits.

It was only when I got home that I realised I had signed up for the excess insurance at a cost of hundreds of euros. Only one of the card payments had been the refundable deposit. It appears that other customers using the same Avis site have been complaining of similar treatment on Google reviews.

Despite that, Avis refuses to refund me. My credit card company claims it can't do anything because I stupidly signed the contract (it was presented on an iPad, and it wasn't clear that there were other pages).

I feel that the employee at the agency tricked me into paying for something I had explicitly said no to. Is there anything I can do?
LS, *by email*

Despite considerable improvements in recent years – these kinds of stories were common across Europe a decade ago – hiring a car is still something of a leap of faith. It is very difficult for people to know exactly what they are signing up for in such circumstances, and this wouldn't be the first case of a car hire customer paying for the extra insurance without realising it.

After I took up your case with Avis's UK division, it had a change of heart.

"After reviewing the fee, we have apologised to **LS** and issued a refund. We appreciate the customer bringing the issue to our attention and encourage our customers to fully review their rental agreement before signing. We are taking preventive steps to avoid this happening in the future," says a spokesperson.

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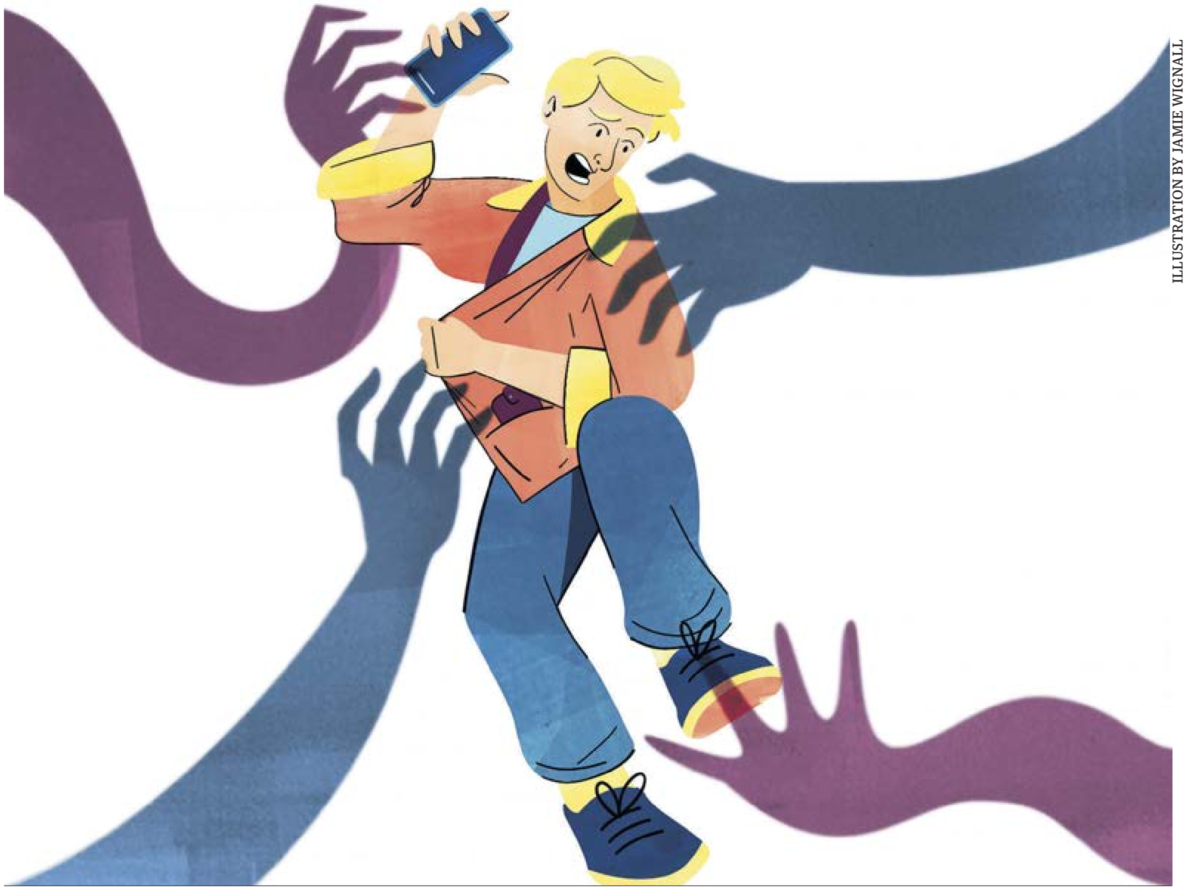


ILLUSTRATION BY JAMIE WIGNALL

Money hacks What to do if you've been scammed

Sarah Marsh

Act quickly

Martyn James, a consumer rights expert, says most scams involve getting you to transfer money directly and/or obtaining enough personal information to access your bank account, or using private details to set up a new account under your name - also known as identity fraud.

If you think you have been scammed, call your bank or card provider to report it immediately.

"The bank and credit card companies all say, weirdly, that lots of people do this very British thing where they feel so foolish, they don't do anything," James says. "But there is action you can take, and it all depends on reacting as quickly as possible."

He advises that you call the main customer phoneline for your bank or card provider.

"Lots of people call the fraud line, but it [often] has lengthy waiting times. It can be hard to reach your provider this way," James adds.

Another option is to call 159 - this is a central number that can put you through to one of several big high street banks that have signed up, including HSBC, Lloyds and Barclays.

James says that if a large sum is going out in chunks across a period of time, then you can halt it in the process. "It is possible a transaction may have been frozen, so even if you have left it an hour or so, it is still worth reporting it, as your bank may have spotted a pattern and stopped the activity on your account while they work out what is going on."

Check your banking app

A lot of apps offer the option to freeze a card online, so if you are worried, you can do this and then talk to your bank.

"You can also report a stolen card on most banking apps," says Lisa Webb, a consumer law expert at the consumer group Which?.

It is harder to report fraud itself via a banking app, so you may still have to call a number.

"Often, staff on those hotlines are trained to deal with fraud reporting and will know what questions to ask and information to gather," Webb says. "It's useful to speak to a human about these things."

Banks should help

"If it is not an authorised payment, you can tell them this and you should get your money back," James says.

Webb adds that if you transfer money to a scammer, your bank is the best place to go first "because an awful lot of banks are signed up to" the voluntary contingent reimbursement model code (CRM code). She says: "They have to reimburse blameless victims of 'authorised push payment' (APP) scams."

She adds: "Unfortunately, we do find that it's a lottery as to whether a bank reimburses you straight away. It is down to the reference of being blameless, as some banks have a higher threshold."

Webb says there are other ways to get your money back if you used a credit or debit card to buy something from a scammer.

"If, for example, it's a credit card, sometimes consumers can rely on section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act and they can get money back," she says. There are limits, so for example, you need to have spent more than £100 on the card but less than £30,000.

"With a debit card, you can sometimes use a chargeback scheme. This is not enshrined in law, but some banks subscribe to it," Webb says.

James says you can complain to the Financial Ombudsman Service if you have been scammed and you think your bank did not spot the fraud. He adds that if you have accidentally handed over your banking passcodes, it can sometimes be more difficult, so if you realise this may have happened, check for any unusual transactions.

> *'Lots of people call the fraud line, but it has lengthy waiting times'*
>
> **Martyn James**
> *Consumer rights expert*

Check your credit rating

James says that the worst and most frustrating situation is when data is scraped and used to commit identity fraud.

To avoid this, you should be careful with personal details, especially anything sent over email. For example, people often send themselves copies of their passport with the subject line "passport". A scammer who has your email access codes can then get this document relatively easily, and see all of the personal details it contains.

"Something practical to do is search for and delete emails like this," James says.

You should keep an eye on your credit file using a credit reference agency such as Experian.

These agencies have online guides on ID theft, and Citizens Advice also has good information.

Report fraud to prevent it

Webb says you can report fraud in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to Action Fraud or, if you are in Scotland, to the police.

"If you are dealing with a situation such as purchase fraud - for example, someone is selling something dodgy - you can also go to Trading Standards, who can take enforcement action against retailers," she says.

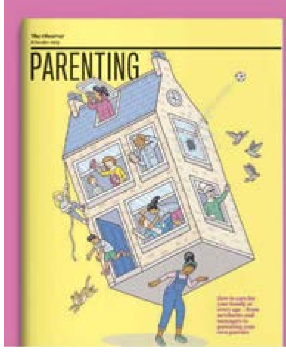
She advises going to the police and your bank if personal information has been taken in case someone tries to clone your card.

Change your logins

"If you have data stolen or copied, then change all your online passwords - that is key," Webb says.

"If someone gets hold of a few bits of information, they can use it in ways you might not expect."

Happy families



Helpful advice on parenting from our experts

There's no 'one size fits all' rule to parenting. However, our experts are on hand to help you steer your child to a better future, with everything you need to know about babies, how to talk to teenagers and the best way to parent your parents.

Only with the Observer on Sunday 8 October



The Observer



◀ **Warminster, Wiltshire**
£900,000
The blue plaques scheme started back in 1866 and since English Heritage took over in 1986 it has put 900 up in London. Outside the capital, many local councils, civic societies and other organisations run similar programmes. This Grade II-listed property was home to the veterinary surgeon William Webster for 40 years before the second world war. It has five bedrooms and four bathrooms, a wine cellar and a one-bedroom annex. The house is close to the National Trust's Cley Hill, which is within Cranbourne Chase, an area of outstanding natural beauty. *Hamptons, 01722 480 142*



Fantasy house hunt
Homes with blue plaques

Compiled by Anna White

▶ **Enfield, London**
£1.595m
This four-bedroom home in Enfield Town conservation area was built in the 16th century and was home to the essayist siblings Charles and Mary Lamb in the 1820s. They loved the area of riverside footpaths, and Charles would to write to Wordsworth and Coleridge extolling the virtues of Enfield. The house still bears a plaque with the siblings' names on, although it is not the blue kind. The timber frame has been lovingly restored using Herefordshire green oak, along with the Georgian panelling and the fireplaces. *Inigo, 020 3687 3071*



▲ **Worthing, West Sussex**
£695,000
The Beach House, built in 1820, has three blue plaques: one for hosting King Edward VII, another for housing the US-born playwright Edward Knoblock and one for sheltering children evacuated in the Spanish civil war. The interior renovation was featured on the Channel 4 show George Clarke's Old House, New Home. There is a two-bedroom flat for sale on the ground floor. *Winkworth, 01903 216 219*

▼ **Sedgefield, Co Durham**
£1m
Built in 1707, this unusual Queen Anne-style building has lived many lives. The 12-bedroom mansion was constructed for the judge Robert Wright. He used it to entertain hunting parties, and there is even a court room. It is currently used as an office but, with its sweeping staircase, spindles and balustrades, it would suit a plush boutique hotel or sprawling family home. *Finest Properties, 01434 622 234*



◀ **Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**
£1.95m
According to the blue plaque awarded by the National Theatre and the Cheltenham Civic Society, this Grade II-listed property was the birthplace of the noted actor Sir Ralph Richardson – who was once co-director of the Old Vic. The detached property has five bedrooms and three bathrooms. Through a neat front garden, steps lead up to the raised hallway which leads off to a dining room, drawing room and kitchen. With its pretty shutters, ornate balcony and grand stone staircase, there is something of the theatrical about it. *Knight Frank, 01242 246 9503*



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Let Freedom Ring: Celebrating the Sounds of America

The Philharmonia Orchestra's series *Let Freedom Ring* celebrates the dazzling diversity of American music, the creative crosscurrents between classical music and jazz and the musicians whose distinctive sounds have shaped their country's identity.

Let Freedom Ring spans over a century of music, from Dvořák's 'New World Symphony' to the 21st century. Alongside well-known composers such as Aaron Copland, George Gershwin and Duke Ellington, it features those who deserve a wider audience outside the US, such as Margaret Bonds and William Grant Still.

Trailblazing American conductor Marin Alsop conducts the opening concert on Thursday 19 October. The Marcus Roberts Trio joins the orchestra for Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue'.

On Thursday 26 October, there's the chance to hear Aaron Copland's Symphony No. 3, widely considered the greatest American symphony ever written, and Samuel Barber's dreamy 'Violin Concerto' with soloist Renaud Capuçon. On Thursday 9 November, star violinist Nicola Benedetti joins the Philharmonia for Wynton Marsalis' 'Violin Concerto'.



Julia Bullock © Mark Allan



Marin Alsop © Alejandro Sánchez-Garrido

On 19 November, there's a tribute to jazz legend Wayne Shorter, who died in March. The line-up includes saxophonist Ravi Coltrane and vocalist esperanza spalding.

The last concert features Julia Bullock in songs by Margaret Bonds and George Gershwin. No survey of American music would be complete without Dvořák's 'New World Symphony', which brings the series to a close on Thanksgiving, Thursday 23 November.

Let Freedom Ring: Celebrating the Sounds of America is at the Royal Festival Hall in London from 19 October to 23 November, and there are also concerts in Bedford and Leicester. Tickets start from just £10.

Philharmonia

Book now at *philharmonia.co.uk* or call 0800 652 6717. Registered Charity number 250277.

Rock the holiday season at Cavern Club venues

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Get ready to rock around the Christmas tree at Liverpool's Cavern Club venues. This festive season, immerse yourself in the ultimate rock 'n' roll experience. They're serving up a sleigh-load of excitement with live music from the Cavern Club Beatles every Friday and Saturday evening in the iconic music venue's Live Lounge.

Enjoy festive foodie treats in The Cavern Restaurant as you're entertained by rock 'n' roll Santa. Indulge in the spirit of the season with their yuletide menu, including heartwarming winter favourites and sparkling cocktails that will make your taste buds sing. Whether you're planning a get-together with friends or a family gathering, The Cavern Restaurant has you covered.





Here's a date for your diary! Don't miss a special visit from rock 'n' roll Santa in The Cavern Restaurant on Sunday, 10 December, from 1pm to 6pm. Visit *thecavernrestaurant.com/booking* to book your table for a taste of rock 'n' roll.

This December, The Cavern is ringing in the bells of New Year's with two stages of live music in the Cavern Club. Twist the night away to the energetic sound of Beatles Complete and 60s classics from The Tony Skeggs Band or say 'hello' to 2024 and 'goodbye' to 2023 with The Cavern Club Beatles New Year's Eve Party – you decide! All your holiday wishes are covered at The Cavern, Liverpool.

To book your Cavern Club tickets, visit *cavernclub.com/whats-on* or to book your table at The Cavern Restaurant, visit *thecavernrestaurant.com/booking* and quote SANTA. Let the rock 'n' roll festivities begin!

Perfection, of a Kind: Britten vs Auden

On Sunday 5 November, City of London Sinfonia (CLS) and the *London Review of Books* (LRB) present an unmissable evening of musical-literary fireworks, sparked by the collaborations and collisions between two of the greatest artists of the 20th century, Benjamin Britten and W.H. Auden.

Taking place at Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall, this special one-off performance will feature CLS musicians together with a trio of stage and screen luminaries – Johnnie Fiori, Alex Jennings and Barrie Rutter. It will be directed by Phillip Breen and conducted by Matthew Kofi Waldren. With a title taken from Auden's 'Epitaph on a Tyrant', the performance traces the full arc of Britten and Auden's creative relationship: from youthful beginnings to a wildly productive middle period and a tempestuous end, with a late-life coda as imagined by Alan Bennett.



© Britten Pears Arts

The association between Britten and Auden began in the mid-1930s when they worked together on documentaries for the GPO Film Unit and plays for the Group Theatre. Initially overawed by Auden's precocious gifts, Britten eventually emerged from this apprenticeship with a genius so singular that Auden never quite forgave him. Perhaps because of this, the debt owed by Britten's early masterpieces to the lessons of their partnership have been underestimated.

Marking 50 years since Auden's death and 110 years since Britten's birth, *Perfection, of a Kind: Britten vs Auden* is the first instalment of a new partnership between City of London Sinfonia and the LRB exploring intersections between literature and music.

Perfection of a Kind: Britten vs Auden is playing on Sunday 5 November at 6pm. Tickets for sale from £12 to £40.

City of London Sinfonia — LRB

Book now at *lrb.me/britten*

Experience all the feels at an immersive opera

English Touring Opera bring romance, intrigue and comedy to stages around the country this autumn as they premiere new productions of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* and *Cinderella (La Cenerentola)* by Rossini. One a satirical drama about sex and murder, the other a feel-good comedy, both centre on women who chart their own path in a hostile society and gain power and influence through their force of personality.



Credit: Richard Hubert Smith

English Touring Opera's general director, Robin Norton Hale, directs *The Coronation of Poppea*, one of the first operas ever composed and a darkly funny romp through Ancient Rome as the Emperor Nero's lover, Poppea, schemes to replace her rival, the Empress Ottavia, on the throne. Jessica Cale and Martha Jones star as Poppea and Nero.

With Monteverdi's masterpiece presented in a new orchestration by conductor Yshani Perinpanayagam and a razor-sharp new English translation from poet Helen Eastman, *The Coronation of Poppea* is packed with engaging characters doing their best to keep their heads above water in a brutal world.

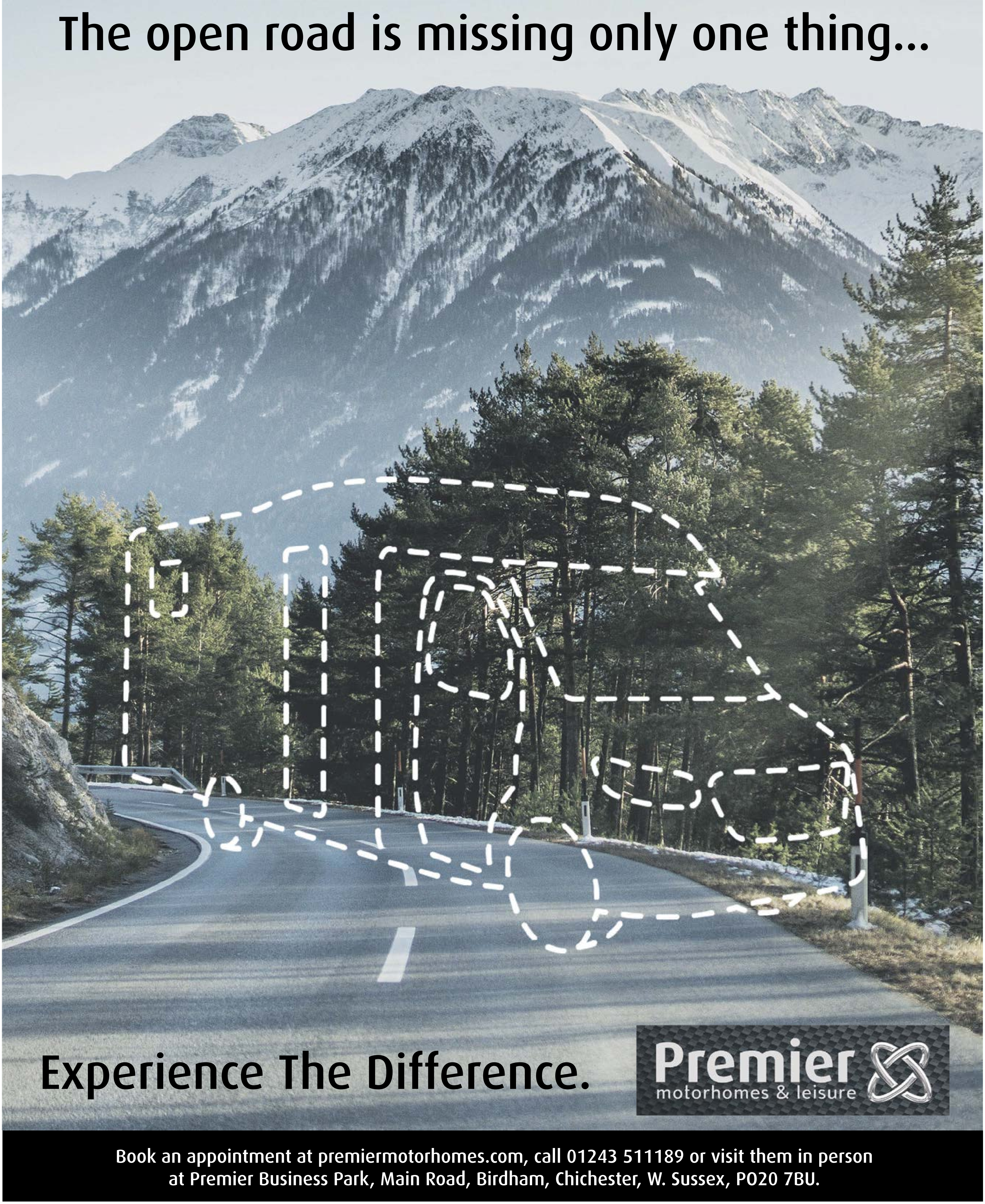
Set against *The Coronation of Poppea* is Rossini's bold, funny and exhilarating *Cinderella*, an opera packed with memorable characters and virtuosic music. Director Jenny Ogilvie's new production celebrates the original story's focus on the triumph of love and justice, while asking what it would take to make someone change their life story for the better. Naomi Woo conducts, while mezzo-soprano Esme Bronwen-Smith leads the cast as Cinderella.

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA — Opera that moves

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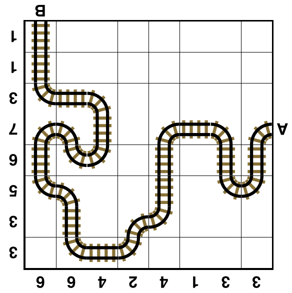
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Puzzles

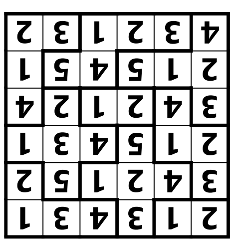
Solutions



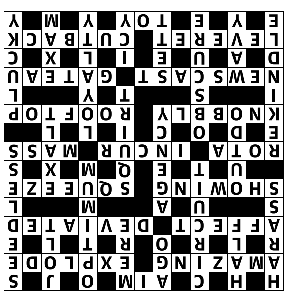
Train tracks

Word wheel

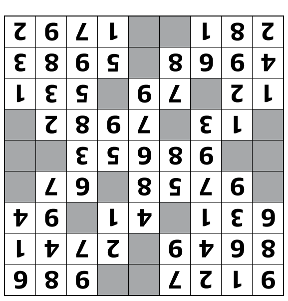
VIOLENTLY



Suguru



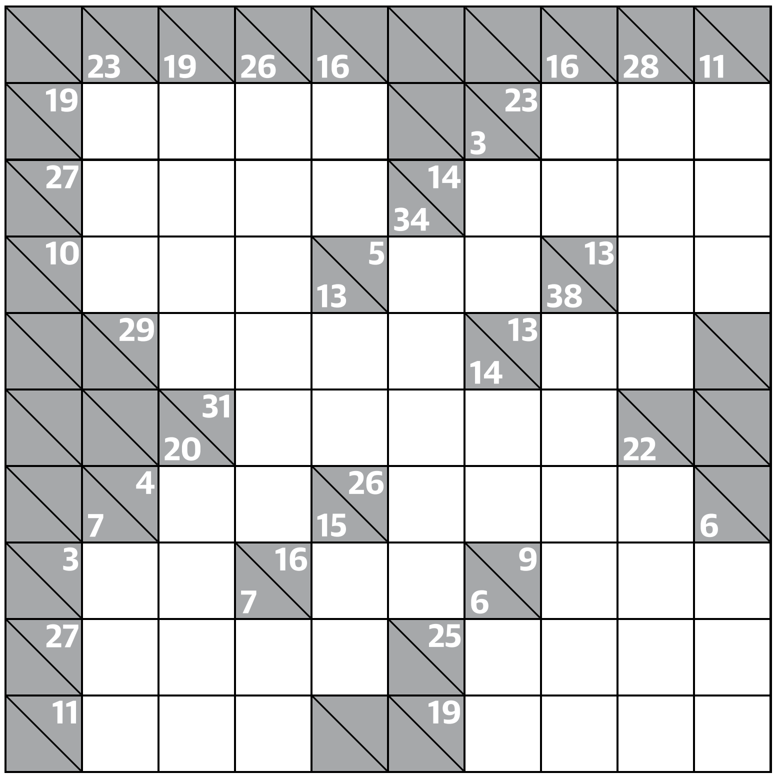
Codeword



Kakuro

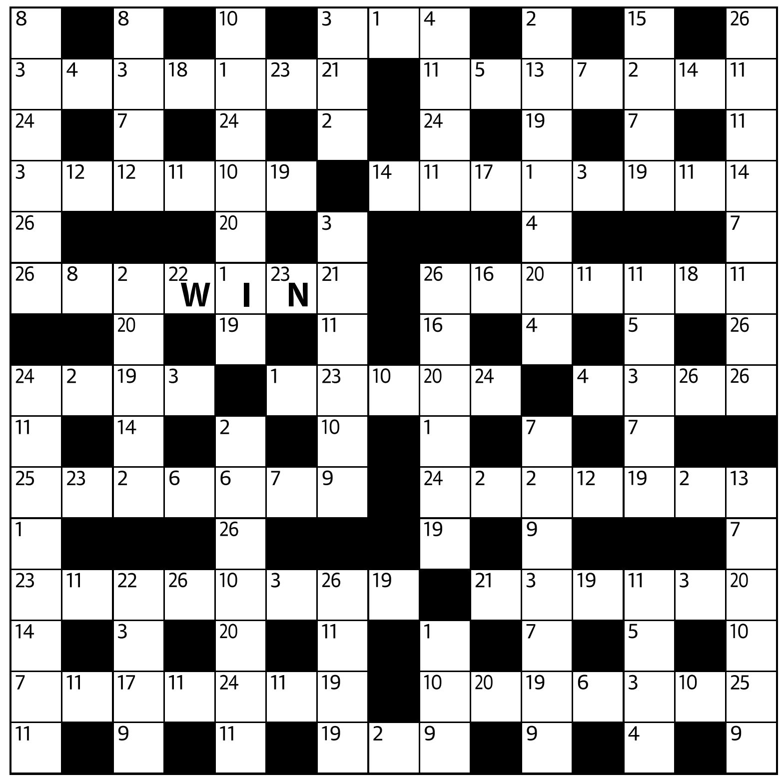
Kakuro

Fill the grid so that each block adds up to the total in the box above or to the left of it. You can only use the digits 1-9 and you must not use the same number twice in a block.



Codeword

Crack the code to fill in the crossword grid. Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. A number of letters have been decoded to help with the identification of other letters and words in the grid.

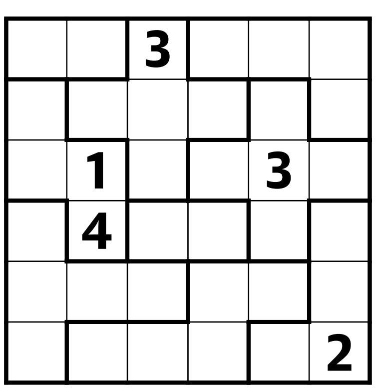


A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
I												
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
								W	N			

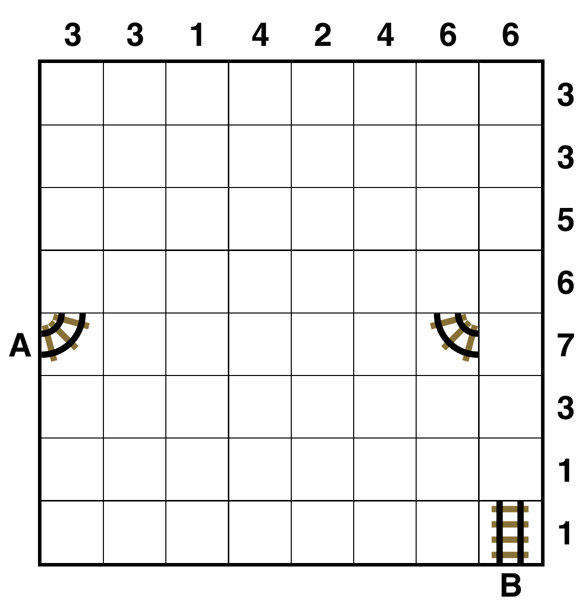
Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of 2 squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.



Train tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.

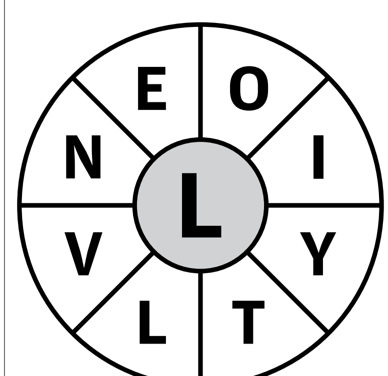


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Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-50. Good-42. Average-31.



Puzzles

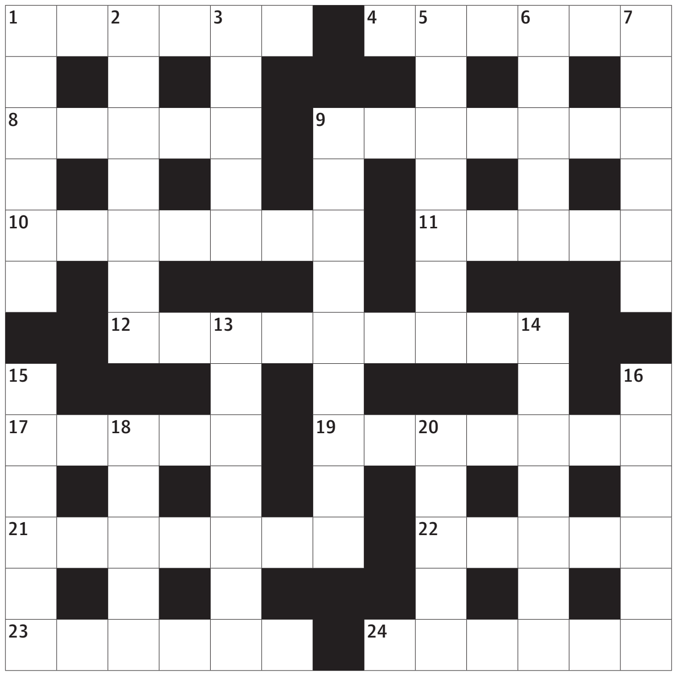
Quick crossword No 16,668

Across

1 Gallic (6)
4 Try (6)
8 Tempest's spirit (5)
9 Sordid dirt (7)
10 Large cushion (full of dried pulses?) (7)
11 Large US or Australian spread for raising cattle (5)
12 Shoulder bag (9)
17 Block of cast metal (5)
19 Excessive freedom (7)
21 Don't say a word (4,3)
22 By ear (5)
23 Have faith (in) (6)
24 Huntsman or house, say (6)

Down

1 Overweight (6)
2 Last words? (7)
3 Someone famous (abbr) (5)
5 Marine museums (7)
6 Tower for guiding pilots (5)
7 Hearty (anag) (6)
9 Small boiled sweet (for the Nutcracker fairy?) (9)
13 Substance essential in small quantities for normal metabolism (7)
14 Very similar (7)
15 Terrible (6)
16 Uri _ , spoon bender (6)
18 Motivate (informal) (3,2)
20 Muscular spasm (5)



Yesterday's Quick crossword

Solution No 16,667

				W	A	S	P	S	N	E	S	T
M		J		I		U		O		L		R
A	L	E	R	T		B	O	L	O	G	N	A
R		N		H		M		E		I		P
G	E	E	K	C	H	I	C		A	N	T	S
I		S		A		T		P		M		H
N	E	A	R	L	Y		G	E	L	A	T	O
A		I		F		S		M		R		O
L	U	S	T		B	I	T	B	Y	B	I	T
S		Q		S		E		R		L		I
E	Q	U	A	T	O	R		O	C	E	A	N
A		O		U		R		K		S		G
T	H	I	R	D	R	A	T	E				

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Sandwich sudoku

Medium

Place the digits from 1-9 in each row, column and 3x3 block. The clues outside the grid show the sum of the numbers placed between the 1 and 9 in that row or column.

4									3
									28
									0
								4	21
									15
3									20
									11
									22
								1	15
2	12	11	5	35	11	20	25	7	

Chris Maslanka
Solutions

1 In denying two alternatives A and B, it's *neither A nor B*. If we were asserting alternatives it would be *A or B*. Churchill remarked of the name Bossom that it was "neither one thing nor the other". The same applies here. With thanks to John Bull (and others) who spotted this.
2 n^3. The algebraic expression lists the number of cubelets with 3 exposed faces (the 8 corners); the number with 2 (the edges but not at the corners, $12(n - 2)$; the number with 1 exposed face $6(n - 2)^2$; and the number with no exposed faces $(n - 2)^3$. No wonder they total n^3.
3 Each passage separately takes up the space of n cubelets; 3n would be correct but for the fact the space the central cubelet would occupy has been counted 3 times; so $3n - 2 = 9 - 2 = 7$. There were originally $3^3 = 27$; so $27 - 7 = 20$ remain. If you are good at visualising the horizontal layers you could count: $8 + 4 + 8 = 20$ as well. **Point to Ponder:** What if n were 5?
4 7. Suppose it's an $n \times n \times n$ cube. $n^3 - (n - 2)^3 = k(n - 2)^3$, where k is an integer; so $n^3 = (k + 1)(n - 2)^3$. This means $[n/(n - 2)]^3 = k + 1$; this means $[n/(n - 2)]^3$ is an integer. Now, $n > 2$, and $n/(n - 2)$ decreases as n grows larger; so after $n = 3$, $n/(n - 2) = 3$, and $n = 4$, $n/(n - 2) = 2$ no further solutions are expected. Well, $n/(n - 2) = 1 + 2/(n - 2)$, and if this is an integer, then $n - 2$ must be one of the two factors of 2! We have the trivial case $n = 3$ (26 times as many); and $n = 4$ (7 times as many). Being a little crisper: if f = (number outside)/(number inside), f -> 0 (monotonically!) as n approaches infinity (gets big). Now f cannot be 1; and for $n = 7$, f has already fallen below 2; so any valid value of n must be an integer lying between 3 and 6 inclusive. Now $n = 3$ and $n = 4$ work (we've checked); $n = 5$ and $n = 6$ don't. So $n = 3$ and $n = 4$ are the only solutions.
5 $(6 \times 16)/(6 \times 64) = 1/4$. Why are the chances of red uppermost 1/n for an $n \times n \times n$ cube?

Wordplay: Wordpool d), c), d); **Jumbles** PERTINACITY; **University College** KEELE, KEBLE; **Appetising Alphabet Soup** MOUTHWATERING; **Cultural Question** BOTTIJELLY; **Missing Links** a) ship/ping/pong b) zero/sugar/rush c) escape/room/service d) parachute/pack/horse e) place/setting/sun f) not/ice/hockey



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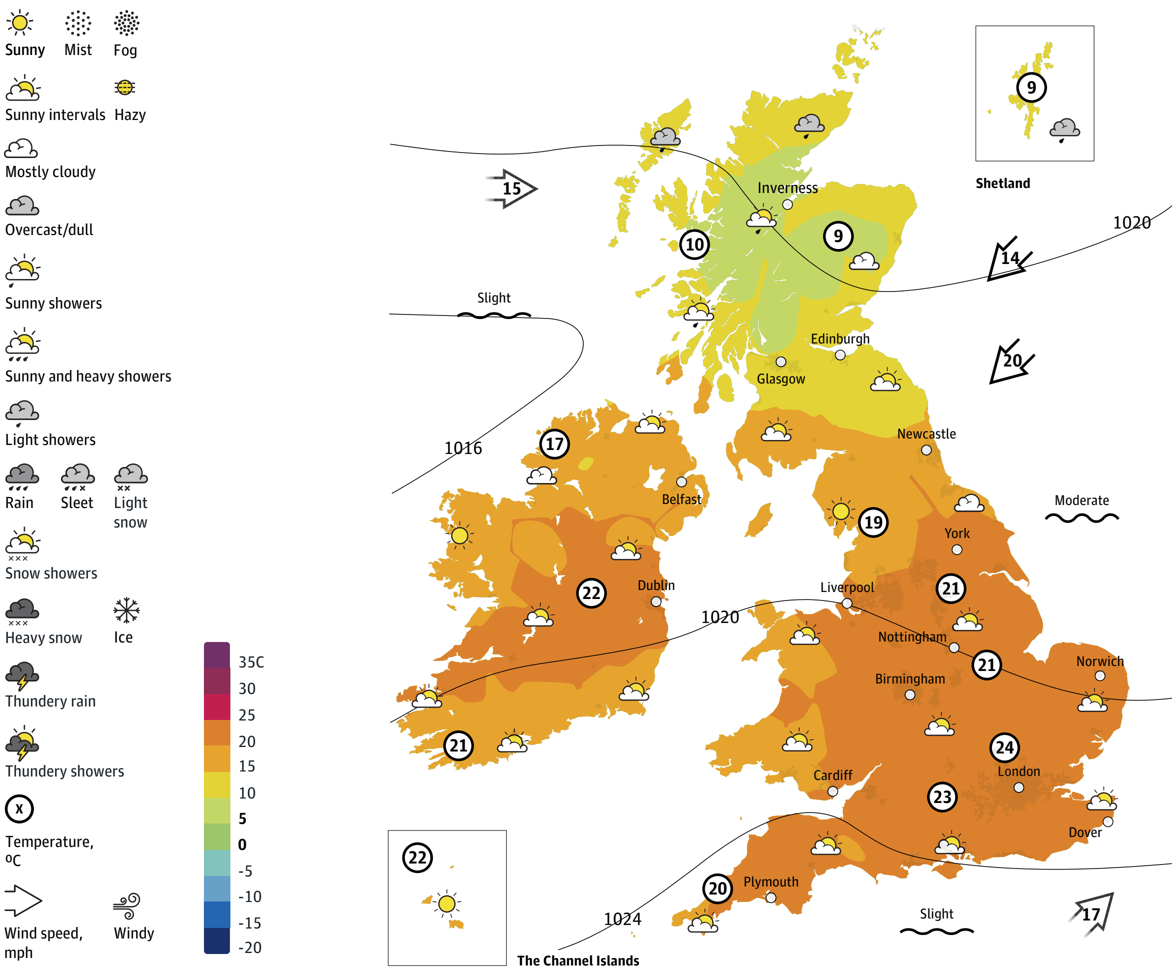
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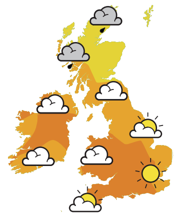
Weather
Saturday 7 October 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

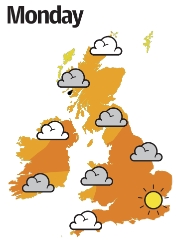


Forecast

Low 13 High 19
Tomorrow



Low 13 High 20
Monday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

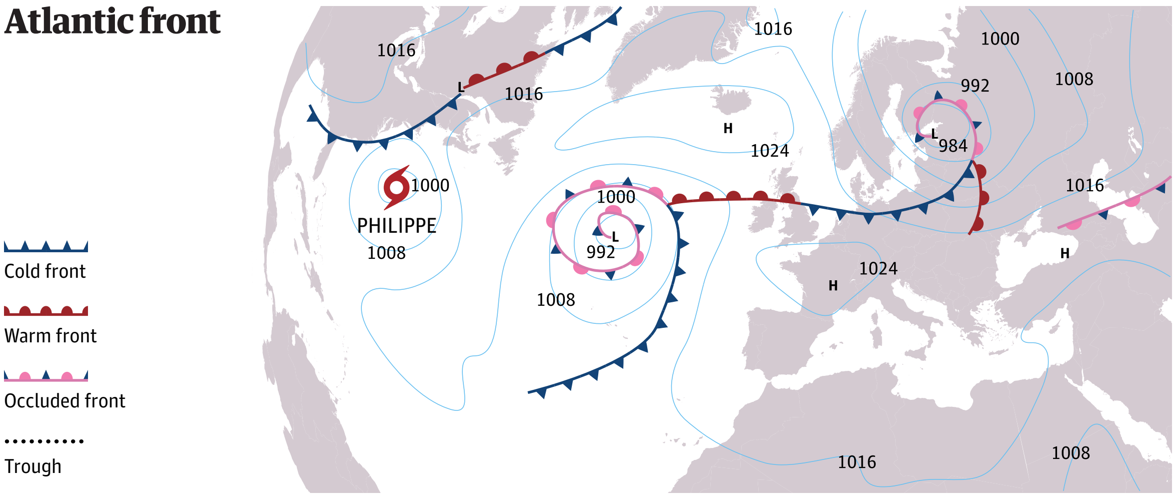
Latest	
02 Oct 2023	418.37
Weekly average	
24 Sep 2023	418.29
06 Oct 2022	415.34
06 Oct 2013	393.46
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	13 – 24	0%	Low
Manchester	13 – 22	0%	Low
Edinburgh	9 – 13	100%	Low
Belfast	14 – 19	25%	Low
Birmingham	13 – 23	0%	Low
Brighton	13 – 20	0%	Low
Bristol	13 – 20	0%	Low
Cardiff	13 – 20	0%	Low
Newcastle	9 – 17	85%	Low
Penzance	14 – 19	0%	Low

Atlantic front



High tides

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Aberdeen	0818	3.3m	2039	3.3m
Avonmouth	0023	9.6m	1243	9.4m
Barrow	0551	6.8m	1823	6.8m
Belfast	0530	2.9m	1755	3.1m
Cobh	--	--	1145	3.1m
Cromer	0022	4.0m	1342	3.7m
Dover	0521	5.4m	1754	5.2m
Dublin	0627	3.2m	1854	3.3m
Galway	--	--	1134	3.8m
Greenock	0618	2.8m	1827	3.0m
Harwich	0525	3.2m	1809	3.2m
Holyhead	0455	4.2m	1727	4.4m
Hull	--	--	1246	5.5m
Leith	0923	4.3m	2150	4.3m
Liverpool	0519	7.0m	1756	7.0m
London Bridge	0730	5.6m	2014	5.7m
Lossiemouth	0626	3.1m	1845	3.1m
Milford Haven	--	--	1231	5.0m
Newquay	--	--	1128	5.2m
North Shields	1019	3.9m	2242	3.9m
Oban	--	--	1147	2.8m
Penzance	--	--	1107	4.2m
Plymouth	1118	4.3m	2352	4.0m
Portsmouth	0555	3.8m	1807	3.7m
Southport	0425	6.7m	1702	6.7m
Stornoway	0206	3.5m	1443	3.6m
Weymouth	--	--	1135	0.4m
Whitby	1047	4.3m	2311	4.3m
Wick	0558	2.6m	1816	2.7m
Workington	0550	6.2m	1822	6.2m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0710
Sun sets	1825
Moon rises	2340
Moon sets	1623
New Moon	14 Oct

AccuWeather.com
Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1847 to 0740
Birm'ham	1831 to 0719
Brighton	1826 to 0712
Bristol	1836 to 0722
Carlisle	1833 to 0726
Cork	1858 to 0746
Dublin	1848 to 0739
Glasgow	1838 to 0734
Harlech	1840 to 0729
Inverness	1835 to 0734
London	1825 to 0711
M'chester	1832 to 0722
Newcastle	1828 to 0722
Norwich	1819 to 0708
Penzance	1848 to 0732

Weather tracker

Typhoon Koinu made landfall in southern Taiwan's Hengchun peninsula on Thursday as a category 4 typhoon. The storm's eye crossed over Eluanbi, on the southern tip of Taiwan, for about five minutes. At this stage the maximum sustained winds were recorded at 135mph, according to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center.

By Thursday afternoon the storm was 62 miles off the western coast of Eluanbi, with maximum sustained winds of 89mph. Despite weakening, Koinu is expected to reach coastal areas of southern China this weekend, and the city of Guangzhou has already cancelled some flights and trains.

Heavy rain and intense winds caused damage to trees, billboards and homes across Taiwan. Most businesses and cities declared days off work and school on Wednesday and Thursday, and 310,000 homes experienced power outages. Taiwan's two main domestic airlines, UNI Air and Mandarin Airlines, cancelled most flights and the transport minister said 46 international flights were cancelled. Ferry services to Taiwan's outer islands were also halted. So far, there has been one reported death and 304 injuries.

Alice Fowle *MetDesk*

Around the world

Algiers	28	Lisbon	32
Ams'dam	20	Madrid	31
Athens	26	Malaga	28
Auckland	16	Melb'rne	15
B Aires	20	Mexico C	22
Bangkok	31	Miami	32
Barcelona	26	Milan	27
Basra	40	Mombasa	30
Beijing	22	Moscow	8
Berlin	17	Mumbai	32
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	25
Brussels	22	Nairobi	28
Budapest	23	New Delhi	35
C'hagen	14	New York	19
Cairo	30	Oslo	12
Cape Town	18	Paris	25
Chicago	13	Perth	31
Corfu	28	Prague	19
Dakar	32	Reykjavik	7
Dhaka	32	Rio de J	34
Dublin	22	Rome	27
Florence	30	Shanghai	22
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	33
H Kong	27	Stockh'm	7
Harare	32	Strasb'g	23
Helsinki	9	Sydney	18
Istanbul	25	Tel Aviv	28
Jo'burg	30	Tenerife	36
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	23
K'mandu	27	Toronto	15
Kabul	27	Vancouv'r	18
Kingston	32	Vienna	23
Kolkata	33	Warsaw	17
L Angeles	34	Wash'ton	21
Lagos	29	Well'ton	13
Lima	20	Zurich	21

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WHAT'S ON

JAMAICA FAREWELL LENNY HENRY'S ODE TO WINDRUSH



The Guardian



Knees up … *Saffron Boomer as Chantrelle*

Lenny Henry grew up on his family's tales of leaving the Caribbean for 1950s Dudley. Now he's teamed up with Russell T Davies to turn them into poignant, hilarious TV. He tells **Leila Latif** about sexism, racism and wishing he was more like Scorsese

'I watched it and burst into tears'



It's hard to imagine quite what it would have been like for the Windrush generation to exchange the warm glow of the Caribbean sun for the rain and icy chill of Britain. But arriving on the set of Three Little Birds makes it a little easier. Everyone is shivering in the crisp winter air, with plumes of white breath accompanying every sentence. At least creator Lenny Henry has the warmth of a three-piece suit, but the stars of his semi-autobiographical series are not so lucky. They are in 1950s bridesmaid's dresses and a lacy wedding gown, with tiny capped sleeves and large A-line skirts that are regrettably billowy. Their teeth chatter as they explain how thrilled they are to be part of the show. "It's good vibes," grins one. "It's just lovely. I love it here. I love it."

Three Little Birds, named after the Bob Marley song, follows three women who travel from Jamaica to settle in the UK in 1957. Gregarious sisters Leah and Chantrelle and their sister-in-law to be, Hosanna, all have very different reasons to leave Jamaica. Leah is escaping an abusive marriage, Chantrelle dreams of becoming a movie star, and Hosanna wants to settle down and start a family. They come together to overcome racism, sexism and forge their own paths. Inspired by the real-life Henry family, it's a heartfelt and frequently hilarious drama.

Henry's mother and aunts arrived in the UK in 1957, which was a tumultuous time. "In '58 there were riots in Notting Hill followed by Dudley in '62," he says. "To see 'Keep Britain white' written on a wall when you're walking down the street, that's tough. And this was every day for them." Henry teamed up with British TV powerhouse Russell T Davies and talked him through heaps of family anecdotes that were recounted to him as a child, then Henry wrote the show making sure none of his relatives' actual names were used. "It had to be fictionalised as my family are very litigious," laughs Henry.

Actor Rochelle Neil is seemingly less worried about being sued. She explains that her character Leah "is inspired by Lenny's mum Winnie" – for whom Lenny was the first of her children to be born in the UK. When we meet Leah, says Neil, she has "escaped a toxic marriage, left her children behind and come to the UK to build a new, better, healthier life, then assemble the kids." For Henry, putting his beloved late mother and her sacrifices on screen has proved incredibly emotional. "I watched the sizzle reel the other day and burst into tears. I'm nine-tenths water, but it's really lovely," says Henry. Like many people who have lost a parent, he still regrets not preserving every memory, recipe and piece of wisdom. Henry says he envies Martin Scorsese's documentaries on his parents featuring his mother's recipe for veal parmesan. "I wish I'd done that with my mum," he sighs. "I left home when I was 16 so I never got the chance to stand by her and watch how she cooked. The most I did was I got a little cassette recorder, and I got her to tell me how to make her Christmas cake."

Neil's own father was born in Jamaica, and his parents left for the UK before sending for him two years later. But Three Little Birds is also the first acting job she took after having her own baby, and now "there's a whole new layer of fear and part of your brain you didn't know existed." Coming to the part with a 10-month-old helped inform



her performance with the "first-hand experience of the love and sacrifices that you 100% will make for your baby."

While the era didn't see anything unusual about setting off for pastures new without your children, it did hold particular judgment for women who were ambitious and sexually liberated. This is something we see in action with the character Chantrelle, based on one of Lenny's aunts (please don't sue me Henry family). At a raucous house party the night they arrive, Chantrelle selects an attractive man to get a little handsy with, much to his absolute delight. This results in a screaming match with Leah, who is unimpressed by her sister's risque behaviour. She is "very sexually confident. She picks her men and she'll be like, 'You're coming with me,'" says Saffron Coomber, who plays her. "She's quite ahead of her time and she enjoys her beauty. But I love that she's a mess of contradictions - like we all are. Sometimes you get scripts that sing to your bones."

There's particular joy in today's shoot - not only is filming coming

'Whether you're Black or white, you're going to sit there watching with your parents and go: was it really like this?'

to an end, but the scene is set at a wedding. A tiny ramshackle red church has a rusty green Birmingham bus outside, and everyone is the picture of 50s glamour. Hosanna, whose wedding is being captured, is a respectable Christian woman who uses her faith to open her heart to the world. Having joined sisters Chantrelle and Leah on their three-week voyage across the Atlantic to marry their brother, her worldview opens up - which leads her to question the patriarchal constructs around her. "Why am I coming over to England to be with a man? What am I actually here to do?," asks Yazmin Belo of her first appearance in a TV series. "She finds she wants to be a nurse, like so many women, in a time when things revolved around serving someone else rather than serving yourself."

But our three little birds soon realise there are big obstacles to their ambitions. Signs in windows declare "No Blacks, no dogs, no Irish" and work in factories and domestic service turns out to be horrific. Chantrelle, who arrived having agreed to a nanny job at a "competitive rate," is forced into indentured servitude. The Wantage family won't let her use the front door and work her to the bone. They refuse to pay her until she one day proves herself to them, and to make matters worse, before too long, Mr Wantage begins to sexually harass her. "To be in that situation broke her spirit," says Coomber, as if relaying the struggles of a dear friend. "You see an exploration of depression within her, which is really important because mental health in the Black community is still something that's relatively new to be spoken about. Many of my relatives who came over, trying to build their life over here, didn't have time to give space to their trauma. So it's a privilege to start talking about it."

For Henry, part of the joy of making this series comes from using his position to usher in a new generation of Black actors, directors, costume designers and makeup artists. But it's not simply about getting people their first gig to diversify the UK's TV industry. "I think that will happen as long as we keep pushing. If we stop pushing, it stops. That's what I've learned."

Everyone on set seems to have a story that shows how deeply personal Three Little Birds is for people with African-Caribbean heritage. Nonetheless, Sir Lenny believes the show has universal appeal. "It will resonate, I think. Whether you're Black or white, you're going to sit there with your parents and go, 'was it really like this?'" he says. "Maybe they'll try and rationalise it as it was different in those days. It's going to be a meaningful watch."

But whatever conflicts the series puts on screen, there will always be new ones for the next generation. "The kids become British, and that first generation will have to deal with their Britishness," says Henry. "That conflict to me is great for the story, because how do you deal with kids who speak with a Midlands accent and aren't anything like you? Who don't want curried goat because everyone else is eating ham and chips?" He smiles, remembering his mother's cooking. "I had a great mate called Tom, and he would come round for jerk turkey at Christmas and eat three times as much as he'd eaten at his own house." It turns out that his mother's cooking plays a bigger part here than you might imagine - all thanks to that audio recording of her Christmas cake recipe. "I lost the tape! So I made this television series instead."

Three Little Birds will air on ITV1 and ITVX later this month



Sailing by ... *Yazmin Belo as Hosanna and Rochelle Neil as Leah; (left) Lenny Henry*

DAVID VINTINER FOR THE GUARDIAN; RICKY DARKO/ITV; PRIME VIDEO

The Greatest Show Never Made

The mind-bendingly outrageous tale of a 2002 reality series - which was a giant scam

Joel Golby



A personal admission: for the first 24 minutes of Prime Video's new documentary series, The Greatest Show Never Made (from Wednesday), I thought it was a made-up script. Everyone here at Joel Golby HQ is sad to admit this, but I think I misread a press release, or skimmed the wrong page on the wrong website, and - long story short - I thought we'd crossed a new frontier in mockumentary that would change television for ever. From my notes: "I genuinely don't know how they've done the throwback production on this, the de-ageing is better than The Irishman." Or: "The TV presenter reel from the early 00s is eerie in its accuracy." Listen: we got it wrong.

But perhaps that is a testament to the story at the heart of The Greatest Show Never Made, which is both mind-bendingly outrageous but also very, very - almost painfully - of "The Year 2002", in such a way that is serves as a textural time machine for that moment in history. Let me take you back: Kate had just won Big Brother, it was front-page news if David Beckham got a haircut, modems still made that noise. This was a time of hope and technology and an inversion of the 80s philosophy that anyone could strike it rich overnight (anyone could get famous for anything!). And, in all that, 30 people got duped into participating in a reality show that didn't actually exist.

Put it like that, and The Greatest Show is a ghoulish story about a scam, how one svengali-type figure tricked 30 people into giving up their lives (people quit their jobs, let the leases expire on their flats!) to participate in a reality TV format that was only vaguely defined and definitely wasn't sold, for reasons unknown: greed? Perversion? A power fantasy? A grift? The villain of the piece is "Nikita Russian" (from my notes: "They've done so well to nail that particular smug-smart tone TV presenters had back then, and they've styled him so perfectly in a too-big leather jacket"). The victims are seven of the 30 participants (split into teams, the second tranche of contestants figured out it wasn't real about 45 minutes into filming, and honestly I would have liked to have heard more from them).

It would be easy to tell this story in big, affirmative good and bad binaries - Nikita Russian is bad, all the contestants are good, duping people is wrong, this is an outrage and justice must be served - but The Greatest Show is more interesting and nuanced than that. And it helps that the source story is fascinating.

It really was a moment in time: just a little bit pre-internet paranoia (anyone these days receiving a flimsy uncontract from an unspecified production company would just Google them and see it was fake), when a lot of people were shown the hope of the new millennium and felt a bit disaffected by it all (almost everyone who took part did so because, due to the jobs or situations they were in, "every day felt the same"), and, realistically, a lot of reality TV formats were making their contestants famous. What's heartbreaking about The Greatest Show is, before the wheels started to fall off the whole thing, they were probably only about three phone calls and a meeting away from actually making it happen. We'd be rightfully talking about Tim, a clown and camera operator from Dalston, as the most famous and beloved person in the UK right now.

Let me take you back: Kate won Big Brother, Beckham's hair was front-page news, modems still made that noise

Instead, we have this documentary (definitely a documentary) and, as all good documentaries do, it tells the story carefully and from as many angles as possible. We meet Nik's childhood best friend, and the director who dropped out when he realised the format hadn't been sold but not before he'd composed a really hopeful theme tune, and we see raw footage of the auditions. We hear the reasons why everyone took part - every top-level documentary, I find, has a dashed-off sentence that is accidentally heart-rendingly profound; in this one it's Tim saying: "There was part of me that was unhappy. It was a good life, but there was still something missing" - and we see how they're doing now. You would expect seething anger but they all have fairly calm, lucid hindsight about the whole thing.

What a time it was, back then, to wear an unbadged England shirt and listen to Liberty X and dream about meeting Davina. The only really surprising part is this didn't happen more.



Pick of the week
Big Brother
Sunday, 9pm, ITV1

Fancy another one? The original reality TV juggernaut returns after a five-year hiatus, this time nightly on ITV2 (though this launch show takes ITV1's primetime slot). The house. The "carefully selected" housemates. The nominations. The evictions. The winner. They're all back - AJ Odudu is the only thing that's changed, following in Davina McCall and Emma Willis's footsteps as host. Is it possible for Big Brother to ever be as brilliant as it once was? The ultimate social experiment could never have the same cultural impact that it did when it first launched in 2000, but it will be fascinating to see whether producers try to recapture the genius and simplicity of the show's roots. *Hollie Richardson*

Saturday

Pick of the day
First Ladies of Hip Hop
9.35pm, BBC Two
"I set the standard" says MC Sha-Rock. "And not just as a female MC but as an MC full stop." This jubilant history of the under-celebrated women of hip-hop starts in the Bronx in the 1970s. It's an act of retrieval, giving props to the likes of MC Debbie D, self-described "Alpha Females" the Mercedes Ladies and the woman behind the Sugarhill Gang, Sylvia Robinson. Neneh Cherry - who will surely enter the story herself later in the series - narrates. *Phil Harrison*

Strictly Come Dancing
6.20pm, BBC One
Nigel Harman's Nirvana paso doble, Angela Rippon doing the splits, Layton Williams's astonishing quickstep: there have already been many highlights so far this season. But who will survive to cha another cha-cha-cha this week? The dancers are putting themselves through it - and the results are very entertaining. *Hannah Verdier*

Michael McIntyre's The Wheel
8.35pm, BBC One
Like Mastermind on a roundabout, tonight's celebrities have a raft of specialist subjects, from Babatunde Aleshe love of Eddie Murphy to Josh Widdicombe's interest in train stations. But will Gyles Brandreth's knowledge of King Charles III measure up to Anita Rani on women? *HV*


First Ladies of Hip Hop, Sat


Julia Bradbury's Irish Journey, Sat

Julia Bradbury's Irish Journey
8.35pm, Channel 4
Bradbury's travelogues are always engaging: in this one, she goes back to the country of her birth. First up is the south of Ireland, beginning inland at Cashel before heading for the west Cork coast. There's also time to sample gourmet food in Kinsale and learn about the potato famine in Skibbereen. *Jack Seale*

Black Snow
9pm, BBC Four
There's not much wrong with this Aussie whodunnit, but not much to distinguish it from other cold-case dramas either. Another double bill means another drip-feed of clues, for the cops in the present talking to people who are reluctant to revisit their pasts, and for us in the scenes flashing back to 1994. *JS*

Blankety Blank
9.35pm, BBC One
Kaiser Chief Ricky Wilson, Sam Quek and 1Xtra's Remi Burgz are among tonight's guests joining Bradley Walsh. Walsh keeps the chat going as the civilians try to guess what "blank" Wilson thinks you need to be a rock star. And the prize? A sewing set. *HV*


Eva Longoria: Searching for Mexico, Sun

Sunday

Pick of the day
Boiling Point
9pm, BBC One
Philip Barantini's film turned TV show is never less than heart-attack tense, especially now head chef Carly (Vinette Robinson) has launched her new menu. The extended running time does allow for more backstories and banter - a treat with this wonderful cast. So if you can stand the heat, do stay in the kitchen. *Ellen E Jones*

Eva Longoria: Searching for Mexico
7.20pm, BBC Two
Eva Longoria is doing a Stanley Tucci, returning to her Mexican roots for a tour of delicious food and tequila. First up is the country's second city, Guadalajara, where there's street food harking back to the French occupation, a traditional birria stew and some high-end culinary wizardry - and it all looks so, so good. *HV*

Big Little Journeys
8pm, BBC Two
More delights from the natural world - this series follows six tiny animals as they attempt spectacular journeys. The cuteness prize goes to the walnut-sized turtle hatchling while the inevitable victim of human interference is the Formosan pangolin which is the world's most trafficked animal. *PH*

Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins
9pm, Channel 4
There's a certain amount of schadenfreude in seeing a hooded Matt Hancock led into an interrogation room. Tonight, he and the other celebrities are forced to write a "death letter" to a loved one (which, in Hancock's case, feels apt). But you know what would make really great TV? Seeing him denied the oxygen of publicity. *Alexi Duggins*

House of Kardashian
9pm, Sky Documentaries
The origins of "the most powerful female dynasty in history" - expect first-hand accounts of the deals and a few of the scandals too - are examined in this slick three-parter. Future episodes will focus on Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner but it begins with Kris Jenner, the matriarch who finessed her family into an empire. *Graeme Virtue*

Monday

Pick of the day
The Reckoning
9pm, BBC One
Dramatising the life and crimes of Jimmy Savile feels like a huge risk for the BBC. After all, the Beeb's part in both enabling Savile and kicking exposés of his abuse into the long grass remain hard to forgive. Expect a full exploration of institutional failings at the heart of the BBC in a series that has been made with the active cooperation of four survivors of Savile's abuse. Steve Coogan stars and The Reckoning is written by Neil McKay, who previously dramatised the later life of Fred West in Appropriate Adult. *PH*

Love, Victor
8pm, BBC Three
This sharply written but sweet TV sequel to gay romcom Love, Simon sees shy new kid Victor (Michael Cimino) enrolling at Simon's old Atlanta high school. Will he use the fresh start to come out to his family and classmates? There are double bills every night this week; all three seasons will be available on iPlayer. *GV*

Jimmy Doherty's New Zealand Escape
8pm, Channel 4
Jimmy Doherty has been running a pig farm in Suffolk for 20 years, but milking a buffalo for cheese is a first. It's one of several, in fact, in this leg of his New Zealand tour, during which he meets Peter Gorden, the godfather of fusion food, and discovers how to save the famous kiwi bird. *EEJ*

Scarlett's Driving School
8.30pm, BBC One
The ex-Gogglebox star's attempt to help struggling learner drivers continues. Tonight, a woman who has been learning for 14 years tries to pass her test in time for her wedding. But can she manage her anxiety behind the wheel? A dual carriageway meltdown suggests it won't be easy. *AD*

The Long Shadow
9pm, ITV1
The drama about the "Yorkshire Ripper" murders continues, still admirably uncompromising. This week's most disturbing scenes are only tangentially related to Peter Sutcliffe's crimes, as a sex worker and a female officer undercover find terror on the dark streets of Bradford in their interactions with the city's men. *JS*

Big Zuu's Big Eats
10pm, Dave
"Would you sacrifice one of your gold medals to play for Arsenal?" Rowdy gourmet Big Zuu and his deadpan wingmen Tubsey and Hyder welcome Mo Farah to their manor, and the humble Olympian seems delighted to be part of the chaos. No wonder: he gets served up what looks like a record-breaking lamb kebab. *GV*

VINCENT DOLMAN/ITV; QUANG MINH LE/CHANNEL 4; MICHELE K SHORT/BBC


The Reckoning, Mon

Tuesday

Pick of the day
Don't Look Down for SU2C
9.30pm, Channel 4
Celebrities overcome their fear of heights by highwire walking across a London landmark after five weeks of intensive training. Paddy McGuinness is the team leader, and is in the Austrian Alps with the likes of Beverley Callard, Kimberly Wyatt, Chris Hughes and David Ginola. The first task is to hump off a high suspension bridge backwards. *HR*

The Great British Bake Off
8pm, Channel 4
Will anyone bake a lion? Yes, it's bread week, scene of a few classics in series past. Warming up with a simple cottage loaf in the signature bake, the remaining hopefuls then try something Devonian in the technical round, followed by the showstopper finish: plaits. *JS*

Susanna Reid: Can Britain Get Talking? A Tonight Special
8.30pm, ITV1
It's World Mental Health Day, and - as part of ITV's Britain Get Talking campaign - Good Morning Britain's Susanna Reid is visiting schools to investigate children's mental health and the importance of talking as a family. It comes after research found mental health has worsened in almost 40% of British pupils. *HR*

The Real Crown: Inside the House of Windsor
9pm, ITV1
The 80s have arrived as this royal history continues. And with them, newcomers welcome and unwelcome. First, Michael Fagan makes an unscheduled stop in the Queen's bedroom. And then, Di and Fergie arrive, bringing excitement and turbulence. *PH*

Jailed: Inside Maghaberry Prison
10pm, BBC Two
There are more than a few "characters" in Northern Ireland's Maghaberry Prison, and for these few weeks radio presenter Stephen Nolan has been among them. Now he's getting out, but there's still time for more provocative chats with prisoners such as Jackie, whose addiction to gambling, he says, drove him to murder. *EEJ*

Storyville: Made of Steel - Wheelchair Rugby's Fiercest Rivalry
10pm, BBC Four
A feature-length documentary looks back to last year's wheelchair rugby league World Cup, setting out the rivalry between the teams from England and France, and telling players' backstories. A moving tribute to the tournament's diverse competitors, and an irresistible introduction to a thrilling sport. *JS*

Wednesday

Pick of the day
David Mitchell's Outsiders
10pm, Dave
"The insurance waivers have been signed, and the cesspit has been dug!" David Mitchell's task show returns, and six new celebrities need to survive the wilderness and rebuild civilisation. On the first day in camp Alan Davies, Roisin Conaty, Guz Khan, Judi Love, Chris McCausland and Laura Smyth need to smuggle contraband past border control and perform a fable for some underwhelmed children. *HR*

Celebrity Race Across the World
9pm, BBC One
So far, the famous-person spin-off has retained the magic of the original travel contest, revealing intimate details about the celebrities via their interactions with the companion they've brought along. Now the road to Tromsø leaves western Europe. It's about here where they'll start to run low on money and patience. *JS*

Payback
9pm, ITV1
Naturally, Edinburgh's answer to Netflix show Ozark also features a menacing performance from Peter Mullan, this time as the seemingly legit ex-gangster Cal Morris. This episode sees Lexie (Morven Christie) getting dragged deeper into the money-laundering, island-purchasing conspiracy that has already claimed her husband. *EEJ*

Jay Blades: The Midlands Through Time
9pm, Channel 5
The Repair Shop's affable gaffer follows up his recent history of London's East End with a deep dive into the region he has called home since 2015. In this opening episode, he tries out some seventh-century Anglo-Saxon war gear, chats with Coventry's official Lady Godiva and gets a little nervous while decorating a Wedgwood vase. *GV*

Das Boot
9pm, Sky Atlantic
It's the start of the fourth series of this taut, gruesome, second world war drama focusing on German submarines. This time round, the action centres on their missions in the Mediterranean, with tonight's double bill featuring a sortie in Naples, while back home at Berlin naval command, a dangerous conspiracy unfolds. *AD*

Kirkmoore
10.30pm, BBC Three
The writer-director-producer Justin Edgar has made onscreen representations of people with disabilities his life's work. He continues in this new sitcom, set in the fictional Kirkmoore College for disabled students and featuring an all-disabled cast. Tonight, Jack (Christopher John Slater) tries to persuade Keron Day's David that a night out trumps his essay. *EEJ*


Don't Look Down for SU2C, Tue

Thursday

Pick of the day
Interview With the Vampire
9pm, BBC Two
Before her death in 2021, Anne Rice helped to update her juicy vampire story with executive producer son Christopher - and it's a contemporary take worthy of sinking your teeth into. Jacob Anderson stars as Louis de Pointe du Lac, the piercing-eyed vampire who once more meets up with journalist Daniel Molloy to tell him the truth about his life, starting in New Orleans in 1910. *HR*

Pride of Britain Awards
9pm, ITV
Carol Vorderman and Ashley Banjo host the heartwarming awards bash with famous faces - including Ant and Dec, David Beckham and Alison Hammond - celebrating carers, fundraisers and first responders. This year's edition includes a special award in honour of the Windrush generation and their contribution to the UK. *GV*

Taskmaster
9pm, Channel 4
The singular Taskmaster vibes have effortlessly incorporated another five comics - and this latest series suggests the show is in no danger of running out of steam. Tonight, poor Alex Horne has to eat a series of bizarre meals created by the contestants and there is pants-based confusion for Julian Clary. *PH*


Interview With the Vampire, Thu

Cobra: Rebellion
9pm, Sky Max
The Robert Carlyle-led political crisis thriller returns, with his constantly besieged PM grappling with Extinction Rebellion-style protests while also trying to salvage his totally fracked marriage. Perhaps the return of daughter Ellie will help? This amped-up opener succeeds via sheer momentum and a killer cliffhanger. *GV*

The Lovers
9pm, Sky Atlantic
As the odd couple reach their last episode, Seamus (Johnny Flynn) feels the pressure of a live politics show and Janet (Roisin Gallagher) is back at the supermarket. But none of that matters because it's all about whether they'll get together in the end. As unpredictable as ever, thanks to more spiky revelations about their lives. *HV*

Brassic
10pm, Sky Max
Now in its fifth series, this lairy but big-hearted comedy continues to stroll jauntily along - and its cast now sit alongside Derek Trotter and Arthur Daley in the pantheon of lovable TV rogues. Tonight, Tommo (Ryan Sampson) gets a shock: his past catches up with him when a young German appears on the scene claiming to be his son. *PH*

Friday

Pick of the day
Uncanny
9pm, BBC Two
Are you a believer or a sceptic? Danny Robins didn't believe in ghosts … until two years ago. That was when he made the hit supernatural podcasts The Battersea Poltergeist and Uncanny, which so many people responded to with their own paranormal experiences. Now, he's bringing these stories to the screen, starting with Kate - who has been haunted by "Miss Howard" since she was a child. *HR*

Gardeners' World
8pm, BBC Two
Among the potpourri of soothing horticultural segments tonight: Frances Tophill strives to get her evolving Devon garden shipshape for autumn and assesses the tomatoes in her upcycled greenhouse; Rekha Mistry reveals what she has learned from tending a Peak District vegetable patch; and Errol Reuben Fernandes explores a green community project in Wakefield. *GV*

Ghosts
8.30pm, BBC One
Mike's anxiety about becoming a dad is growing, but it seems Alison isn't the only pregnant woman in the house as one of the ghosts also has some happy news. Meanwhile, selling off land to a developer for a golf course might be a good plan for the expectant parents, but Lady Button's not so sure. *HV*

Barbara Knox at 90
9pm, ITV1
The term "Corrie legend" should not be used lightly, but in the case of Rita, the thrice-married queen of the cobbles, it's entirely permitted. As Barbara Knox, who's played her for nearly 60 years, turns 90, she joins Bradley Walsh to look back over her career and share memories. Expect the odd tearful reunion too. *HV*

The Good Ship Murder
9pm, Channel 5
Shayne Ward is the singing detective! In the sense that he plays a cruise ship singer, Jack, who solves crimes on board, in this cheerfully cheesy new sleuthfest where someone is offed in a different port of call each week. Ward's former Coronation Street castmate Catherine Tyldesley is Jack's crime-solving partner. *JS*

Billions
10pm, Sky Atlantic
The effort to stop the dangerous uber-capitalist Mike Prince (Corey Stoll) from becoming the US president continues to cause the formation of some unlikely alliances. Long-term fans of this addictive drama will, however, get more out of a subplot in which Chuck (Paul Giamatti) has to use old-school legal smarts to get his family out of a jam. *JS*



Pick of the week
Frasier
Paramount+, from Friday

Tossed salads and scrambled eggs all round as this reboot finally arrives. And it's notable how little has changed – right down to the now jarring live laughter track. This version provides neat narrative surrogates for Martin and Niles: Frasier's son Freddy (Jack Cutmore-Scott) is a salt-of-the-earth firefighter who is easily patronised but usually right, while David (Anders Keith) is very much the neurotic son of Niles. The plot involves Frasier (Kelsey Grammer) moving back to Boston to teach, hang out with old pal Alan (Nicholas Lyndhurst) and reconnect with Freddy. It serves as a reminder that nostalgia is rarely as satisfying as it promises to be, but it improves once Grammer takes the director's chair. *Phil Harrison*

Lessons in Chemistry
Apple TV+, from Friday
This stylish, 1950s-set series (adapted from the novel by Bonnie Garmus) explores the struggles of a brilliant woman in a world of dull men. Elizabeth Zott is a buttoned-up lab tech, doing lackey work for male scientists while conducting after-hours experiments. One day, colleague Calvin Evans (Lewis Pullman) tastes her superlative lasagne ("This is my 78th attempt. My current focus is cheese") and she comes clean. Her research – molecular gastronomy, basically – is at an advanced stage, and it will culminate in her becoming one of the first TV chefs. Brie Larson is a fine, relatable lead. *PH*





The Greatest Show Never Made
Prime Video, from Wednesday
A documentary telling a bizarre story from the reality TV gold rush of 2002. Lured by the promise of a hefty cash prize of £100,000, a group of people left jobs, homes and partners to throw in their lot with a broadcast entrepreneur called Nik Russian. However, not only was no programme commissioned but Russian had no TV background – he worked in Waterstones. The "contenders" then decamped to a house to work out what was going on – and, with the idea of making their own show, filmed themselves. The result is revealing and darkly comic. *PH*



The Fall of the House of Usher
Netflix, from Thursday
In the throes of the opioid crisis, it makes sense that this series (very loosely) based on a story by Edgar Allan Poe should centre on the pharmaceutical industry. When the heirs of the Usher dynasty (who own the corrupt company Fortunato Pharmaceuticals) start dying, the surviving family members are initially unruffled. But the drama quickly morphs into a supernatural wish-fulfilment revenge parable, played out with lavishly gory relish as the weak spots of the Ushers (sometimes literally and physically) are mercilessly probed by a shadowy figure from their past. *PH*



C*A*U*G*H*T
ITVX, from Thursday
A muddled but intriguing comedy, produced by Sean Penn (who also has a cameo role) in which a quartet of Australian soldiers infiltrate the fictional nation of Behati-Prinsloo to retrieve a sensitive file. When they are mistaken for Americans and captured, a harrowing hostage video goes viral. But is the clip all that it seems, or are the Aussies working with their captors? The soldiers seem way too hapless to be an elite unit – which adds to the sense that something is amiss. A not especially subtle satire on the mediated nature of warfare in the social media age. *PH*

Goosebumps
Disney+, from Friday
It has been several months since any major streaming platform offered us a series in which a group of teenagers get involved in a supernatural mystery, so this drama, inspired by RL Stine's books (and dropping on Friday the 13th!), feels somewhat overdue. As we begin, new residents are moving into "the old Biddle house" – the attachment of a family name to the dwelling is a hint that something terrible once happened there. And so it proves, as the haunting begins and a new generation of high-schoolers are punished for the sins of their parents. *PH*



Shining Vale
Lionsgate+, from Friday
Sharon Horgan's waspish comedy horror returns and Courteney Cox's writer Patricia Phelps is picking up the pieces after the demonic events of season one. Her domestic life is in chaos – Patricia's house is still extremely haunted, her marriage (to Greg Kinnear's well meaning dullard Terry) is moribund and her kids don't want her around any more. Strangely, however, her career is going pretty well – Patricia's new novel is her most strikingly raunchy yet, and it seems that her creativity is being mysteriously fuelled by the mayhem surrounding her. *PH*



CHRIS HASTON/PARAMOUNT+; MICHAEL BECKER/APPLE TV+

Catchup TV

Back in the pressure cooker – and candid fun with Beckham



Boiling Point
BBC One/iPlayer
★★★★☆

The stresses of the professional kitchen are proving irresistible fuel for the small and big screen at the moment. Boiling Point has had several iterations: it was a short film, then it became a feature film. Now, it has been turned into a four-part TV series, which begins with a first episode that asks: what if The Bear isn't stressful enough? In the kitchen, Freeman (Ray Panthaki) is struggling to keep his temper, while Carly (Vinette Robinson) is distracted by calls from her mother. Front of house, there are love affairs, new staff and a general sense that customers are either whiny babies or obnoxious monsters. It is remarkable how quickly Boiling Point drags you into its world and demands that you care about the people there. I wouldn't watch it after a strong coffee, though. *Rebecca Nicholson*

Union With David Olusoga
BBC Two/iPlayer
★★★★☆

This ambitious and stylishly confident four-part series looks at the origins of Great Britain, and the identity that has emerged out of the maelstrom of forces, influences, actions and reactions that have operated on it over the centuries. It's a cut above most of what passes for historical documentary, especially on the BBC. The scripts (written by Olusoga) are meticulous but have flair, the visuals are complementary rather than distracting and the experts are – get this – encouraged to share their expertise. It makes you realise anew what truncated, stilted, second-rate stuff we usually put up with. A fascinating, first-class primer that does what such documentaries should always do: show how we got from there to here, without insisting that it is the definitive take. *Lucy Mangan*

Beckham
Netflix
★★★★☆

Last year, Joe Lycett cracked the veneer of Brand Beckham when he challenged former "gay icon" David to justify his gig as an ambassador for Qatar, where LGBTQ+ people face persecution. You might, then, see the four-part documentary Beckham as part of a process of smoothing over the lines again. It turns out to be surprisingly candid, following the young David from a football-focused, friendless period at school to the training ground of Manchester United. Beckham's Manchester United and Real Madrid teammates and managers appear en masse. It doesn't shy away from anything: he discusses the notorious 1998 red card against Argentina, he and Victoria address tabloid allegations of an extramarital affair. It's a lot of fun, and each episode flies by. Brand Beckham will be relieved. *RN*

Partygate
Channel 4
★★★★☆

Set between the outbreak of Covid in early 2020 and the spring of the following year, Joseph Bullman's film has Boris Johnson played by a lookalike filmed from behind. Our protagonists are the advisers, PR people and junior civil servants around him. By day, they were running the country. By night, they were on the wine and karaoke. Partygate shares one of the key qualities of The Thick of It, which is not just portraying political professionals as unpleasant idiots but showing them never giving a thought to how policy affects people. Aside from when someone has to reply to the public's tweets asking if they can have a Christmas party – absolutely not, the wonk responds, struggling to type because he's hungover. A vital document of national shame. *Jack Seale*

KEVIN BAKER/BBC, DAVID M BENETT/GETTY

Audio



Podcasts
Pick of the week

Wonderbox
Widely available, episodes weekly from Wed

Sam Ryder's obsession with mid-90s F1, Munya Chawawa's (above) love of the Sega Megadrive beat-em-up game Streets of Rage: these are the building blocks of Russell Howard's new series. Celebrity guests pick treasured items and place them in a fictional "Wonderbox" dedicated to their lives' most funny and special moments. It's a genial twist on the chat format and an interesting way to convince guests to share lively anecdotes. *Alexi Duggins*

Lasagna Ganja
Widely available, episodes weekly

Ignore the sound effects of people taking massive tokes and bubbling bongs; it's the podcast that shows stoners can be entrepreneurs too. Affable hosts Xzibit and Tammy "the Cannabis Cutie" provide a good balance of education and wasted giggles as they speak to industry experts about the benefits of weed and the latest trends. *Hannah Verdier*

The Road to Know Her
Widely available, episodes weekly

Alex Fuller and Emi Geddes are on a mission to learn more about women's health – and guts are a good place to start. Dr Megan Rossi is on hand with an easy-to-digest education, talking about seeing gut bacteria as her "bestie", how dieting has messed with the microbiome and why 30 types of plants is a good number. *HV*

Why Didn't You ...
Widely available, episodes weekly

As misogyny reaches new heights by the day, Terri White's podcast where survivors of rape and sexual



assault bravely tell their stories feels like the start of a fight back. It's proudly not sanitised, it's difficult to listen to and it's so vital. Ellie Wilson is the first survivor, talking openly about her attack and the anger-inducing and irrelevant questions she faced in court. *HV*

Out to Lunch With Ade Edmondson
Widely available, episodes weekly

Ade Edmondson takes over hosting duties of the food and chat podcast and is gifted with a dream gig: taking Chrissie Hynde (pictured above) to the Wolseley. Hynde orders the vichyssoise and then dishes up many anecdotes about the art of playing guitar, whether she wrote Smelly Cat and how touring has changed. *AD*



Radio

Africa's Urban Future
Tue, 9.30am, BBC World Service

With Africa's population growing rapidly, it could be home to 40% of humanity by the end of the century. But what does that mean for those living in its cities? This new four-part series looks at how the cities, which are already under pressure, will adapt and provide the living conditions their inhabitants need. Mike Wooldridge and Ruth-Anne Richardson head to the densely populated stretch between Abidjan and Lagos and discover an area already struggling with inequality and a lack of basic housing. *Hannah Verdier*

Poet Laureate in the Arctic
Tue, 11.30am, Radio 4

In this new series, the geography graduate and self-described "nature poet" Simon Armitage makes good on his pledge to centre the environment in his work by travelling to the Arctic. There, with the help of British biochemist Prof Jemma Wadham, the poet laureate can see the ravages of the climate crisis first-hand, translating it all into majestic and urgent poems, heard here for the first time. *Ellen E Jones*

Lauren Laverne
Thu, 7.30am, 6 Music

Has Mike Skinner still got it? Does his once zeitgeist-defining take on scrappy, slightly melancholy garage-infused Brit-rap still work its magic? This morning, he joins Lauren Laverne to talk about his first full-length album in more than a decade, The Darker the Shadow, the Brighter the Light, which sees Skinner wrestling with middle age. Never one to keep things straightforward, Skinner has also written and directed a feature film of the same name to accompany the album. *Phil Harrison*

Any Questions On: The Welfare State
Thu, 4pm, Radio 4

The first edition of Any Questions? was broadcast on 12 October 1948. To mark the panel perennial turning 75, this new series explores how the language of debating has evolved over the lifetime of the show with the help of archive clips. For the opening episode, current host Alex Forsyth has assembled an imposing team of argument experts – including Norman Lamont, Ash Sarkar and BBC political editor Chris Mason – to discuss the evolving role of the welfare state. *Graeme Virtue*



Pick of the week
The Fabelmans
Friday, 8pm, Sky Cinema Premiere

Steven Spielberg mines his own history for his most personal film yet, an emotional 1950s-set drama about family, growing up and the power of cinema. It follows Sammy Fabelman (played by Gabriel LaBelle as a teenager), who becomes obsessed with movie-making at a young age and persists with his celluloid dream as the family relocate from New Jersey to Arizona to California. Although there is nostalgia for the post-war age of opportunity, there is antisemitism, too - and domestic turbulence between his parents (Michelle Williams and Paul Dano). But through Sammy's creations, Spielberg reminds us how films can both uncover the truth and distort it. *Simon Wardell*



Henry V

Saturday, 1.15pm, BBC Two
For his first feature as director, stage star Kenneth Branagh took on a historical drama with history: Shakespeare's tale of a young leader proving himself on the battlefield was also Laurence Olivier's debut behind the camera. Undaunted, Branagh created a version that is more tense and brutal - and muddier - than his thespian forebear's, while retaining the poetry and passion of the play ("We few, we happy few" etc). A weighty supporting cast including Judi Dench, Paul Scofield and Brian Blessed help bring to life a film of fervour and finesse. *SW*



Minority Report

Saturday, 11.05pm, Channel 4
Another terrific sci-fi film culled from the writings of Philip K Dick, this Tom Cruise/Steven Spielberg collaboration melds the best of them both. Cruise plays a cop in the Precrime unit in 2054 Washington, which uses clairvoyants to predict murders before they happen. When his name comes up as a future killer he goes on the run, with Samantha Morton's in-house psychic the focus of his attempt to prove his innocence. Cruise's action chops (all that running!) and Spielberg's skilled world-building make this thriller a must-see - but you knew that already … *SW*

Open Range

Sunday, 6.10pm, 5Action
Between actor-directors Kevin Costner and Clint Eastwood, the flame of the Hollywood western has been kept flickering since its golden age. Costner's accomplished 2003 offering luxuriates in the cinematic expanses of Montana as it tells a hardy yarn of free-grazers v cattle ranchers. Robert Duvall's Boss leads a herd alongside the taciturn yet loyal Charley (Costner), but they fall foul of Michael Gambon's landowner. The lure of putting down roots - embodied in doctor's sister Annette Bening - becomes a factor for Charley, though there's a reckoning to be had first. *SW*





Candyman

Sunday, 10pm, BBC Three
Nia DaCosta's gripping, gory sequel to the 1992 chiller nestles nicely within its producer and co-writer Jordan Peele's trademark African American folk horror realm. Yahya Abdul-Mateen II's Chicago artist and his curator partner (Teyonah Parris) find their middle-class life crumbling when he researches the city's now demolished ghetto Cabrini Green and its hook-handed bogeyman. Aside from the expertly handled scares, DaCosta's depiction of Black urban life proves pleasingly complex. *SW*

Rashomon

Monday, 6.15pm, Sky Cinema Greats
The phrase "fake news" could have been invented for Akira Kurosawa's knotty 1950 period drama, the film that brought him global recognition. A series of people give evidence to a court about the murder of a samurai and the rape of his wife - including the accused bandit, the dead man's spouse, a woodcutter who found the body and even the victim (via a medium). However, none of their narratives tally - so who's lying, or are all of them? A disquieting look at the imperfect edges of human nature, where self-aggrandisement sits side by side with fear. *SW*



Land

Wednesday, 9pm, Film4
Living off the grid might seem like a good idea when the weight of the world is getting too much. But, as Robin Wright's grieving Edee finds when she moves to a remote cabin in Wyoming after her son and husband are killed, abandoning all mod cons merely gives you more time to dwell on the past. She's also useless at self-sufficiency, which is where local Miguel (Demián Bichir) comes in, teaching her how to survive and, slowly, how to accept both death and life. Wright's directorial debut is incredibly touching, with a feel for nature's glories and human frailty. *SW*



Sport

Cricket World Cup
South Africa v Sri Lanka
Sat, 9am, Sky Sports Main Event
A group match from Delhi.

Premier League Football
Luton v Tottenham
Sat, 11am, TNT Sports 1
From Kenilworth Road.

Gymnastics
World Championships
Sat, 1.15pm, BBC One
The first day of the apparatus finals, with Max Whitlock (pictured above) due to compete for Team GB.

Rugby Union World Cup
Wales v Georgia
Sat, 1.15pm, ITV1
England v Samoa is at 4.15pm and Ireland v Scotland at 7.15pm.

Super League Rugby
Wigan Warriors v Hull KR
Sat, 12.30pm, Channel 4
The second semi-final play-off.

Cricket World Cup
India v Australia
Sun, 9am, Sky Sports Main Event
A heavyweight clash in Chennai.

Premier League Football
Brighton v Liverpool
Sun, 1pm, Sky Sports Main Event
With Arsenal v Man City at 4pm.

World Cup Cricket
England v Bangladesh
Tue, 6am, Sky Sports Main Event
England face their second game.

International Football
England v Australia
Fri, 7pm, Channel 4
A friendly from Wembley.

Premiership Rugby Union
Bristol Bears v Leicester Tigers
Fri, 7pm, TNT Sports 1
From Ashton Gate.

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Saturday



Women of Hip Hop & Soul: Later … With Jools Holland, BBC Two

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **10.0** Saturday Kitchen Live (T) **11.30** Nadiya's Simple Spices (T) (R) **12.0** Football Focus (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.10** Weather (T) **1.15** Gymnastics: World Championships (T) The first day of apparatus finals. **4.30** Final Score (T) **5.15** News (T) **5.25** Regional News (T) **5.30** Weather (T) **5.35** Alan Carr's Picture Slam (T) **6.20** **Strictly Come Dancing** (T)

8.35 **Michael McIntyre's The Wheel** (T) With Anita Rani, Babatunde Aleshe, Ekin-Su, Gyles Brandreth, Josh Widdicombe, Nick Knowles and Stacey Dooley.
9.35 **Blankety Blank** (T) With guests Ricky Wilson, Sam Quek, Kerry Godliman, Shane Richie, Remi Burgz and Owen Warne.

10.10 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Match of the Day** (T) Man United v Brentford and Luton v Tottenham.
11.50 FILM **The Turning** (Floria Sigismondi, 2020) (T) A governess is hired to look after an orphaned girl. Horror, starring Mackenzie Davis and Finn Wolfhard.
1.20 **Weather** (T) **1.25** News (T)

BBC Two

6.15 **CBeebies** **6.35** CBBC **9.0** Gardeners' World (T) (R) **10.0** Ice Age Giants (T) (R) **11.0** Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon (T) (R) **12.0** Britain's Top Takeaways (T) (R) **1.0** The Hairy Bakers (T) (R) **1.15** FILM **Henry V** (Kenneth Branagh, 1989) (T) **3.25** This Farming Life (T) (R) **4.30** Gymnastics: World Championships (T) **5.0** Fake Or Fortune? (T) (R) **6.0** Flog It! (T) **6.35** Saving Lives at Sea (T) (R) **7.35** Great Asian Railway Journeys (T) (R)

8.35 **Women of Hip Hop & Soul: Later … With Jools Holland** (T) Featuring Erykah Badu, Kelis, India Arie, Angie Stone, Ms Dynamite, Stefflon Don, Jorja Smith, Little Simz and Mary J Blige.
9.35 **First Ladies of Hip Hop** (T) New series. The story of how female rappers fought for their voices to be heard.

10.35 **First Ladies of Hip Hop** (T) The arrival on the scene of all-female trio Salt-N-Pepa.
11.35 **Lizzo at Glastonbury 2023** (T) Live from Worthy Farm.
12.05 **Top of the Pops: 1990 – Big Hits** (T) (R) **1.05** FILM So Long, My Son (Xiaoshuai Wang, 2019) Chinese drama, starring Jingchun Wang. **4.0** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Love Your Garden** (T) (R) **7.30** Love Your Weekend With Alan Titchmarsh (T) (R) **9.25** News (T) **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning (T) **11.40** Jason Atherton's Dubai Dishes (T) **12.40** Ainsley's Good Mood Food (T) **1.05** News and Weather (T) **1.15** Rugby World Cup 2023 Live (T) Wales v Georgia (kick-off 2pm). **4.15** Rugby World Cup 2023 Live (T) England v Samoa (kick-off 4.45pm). **7.0** News and Weather (T) **7.05** Local News and Weather (T)

7.15 **Rugby World Cup 2023 Live** (T) Ireland v Scotland (kick-off 8pm). All the action from the concluding Pool B match for both teams, held at Stade de France in Paris. Mark Pougatch presents, with analysis from Brian O'Driscoll, John Barclay, Ian McGeechan and Rory Best.

10.35 **News** (T) Weather
10.55 **Olivia Marries Her Match** (T) (R) Tensions begin to rise in the Attwood-Dack household.
11.55 **English Football League Highlights** (T) (R)
1.20 **The Chase** (T) (R) **2.10** The Switch (T) (R) **3.0** Fresh Cuts (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Dubai Dishes (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.10 **The King of Queens** (T) (R) **7.25** Cheers (T) (R) **9.0** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.55** The Simpsons (T) (R) **12.30** Live Super League Rugby (T) Wigan Warriors v Hull Kingston Rovers (kick-off 12.45pm). The second semi-final play-off match. **3.0** Guy Martin's World Tour (T) (R) **3.35** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.05** News (T) **6.35** Britain's Best Beach Huts (T) (R) **7.30** A Royal Guide to: Parks & Gardens (T)

8.35 **Julia Bradbury's Irish Journey** (T) The presenter explores the south of Ireland, from Tipperary to the coastline of West Cork.
9.35 **Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix Qualifying Highlights** (T) Steve Jones presents action from the 18th round of the season at Lusail International Circuit.

11.05 FILM **Minority Report** (Steven Spielberg, 2002) (T) A cop goes on the run when three psychics foretell he is about to kill a man. Sci-fi thriller, starring Tom Cruise.
1.50 FILM **Bad Hair** (Justin Simien, 2020) (T) Comedy horror. **3.30** Hollyoaks Omnibus (T) (R) **5.35** Kirstie's House of Craft (T) (R) **5.50** Cheers (T)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.55** The Smurfs (T) (R) **10.10** SpongeBob SquarePants (T) (R) **10.20** Entertainment News (T) **10.35** Friends (T) (R) **12.0** FILM The Secret Garden (Agnieszka Holland, 1993) (T) **2.10** FILM Kinky Boots (Julian Jarold, 2005) (T) **4.20** FILM From Time to Time (Julian Fellowes, 2009) (T) **6.15** News (T) **6.20** Motorway: Hell on the Highway (T) (R) **7.05** When Motorways Go Horribly Wrong (T)

8.35 **The Royal Express: Secrets of the King's Train** (T) (R) The inside story of the trains used by the monarchy for more than 150 years, meeting long-serving staff.
9.35 **Controversially 1979: That Was the Year That Was** (T) Jan Leeming narrates a look back at key events in TV, film, showbusiness and politics.

11.35 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) Highlights of Bangladesh v Afghanistan.
12.35 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) South Africa v Sri Lanka. **1.30** Live Casino Show (T) **3.30** Friends (T) (R) **3.55** Friends (T) (R) **4.20** Never Teach Your Wife to Drive (T) (R) **5.15** Great Artists (T) (R) **5.45** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Lost Land of the Tiger** (T) (R) The team try to track down tigers throughout Bhutan.

8.0 **Ray Mears and Ewan McGregor: Extreme Jungle** (T) (R) A search for the prehistoric people of the Mosquito Coast.
9.0 **Black Snow** (T) An important witness is found dead.
9.50 **Black Snow** (T) Cormack and Hazel realise Kalana is missing and fear the worst. Last in the series.

10.45 **Parkinson: The Orson Welles Interview** (T) (R)
11.25 **Parkinson: The Richard Burton Interview** (T) (R)
12.05 **Antony Sher and Greg Doran in Conversation With Sue MacGregor** (T) (R) **1.05** Yes Minister (T) (R) **1.35** Ray Mears and Ewan McGregor: Extreme Jungle (T) (R) **2.35** Lost Land of the Tiger (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm FILM Early Man (2018) **8.15** EastEnders **8.45** EastEnders **9.15** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **9.40** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **10.10** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **10.40** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **11.10** Juice **11.40** Juice **12.05** Juice **12.30** Juice **12.55** Juice **1.20** Juice **1.45** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **2.15** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **2.45** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **3.15** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **3.45** Birdsong

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Big Zuu's Big Eats **7.35** Big Zuu's Big Eats **8.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **8.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **9.0** Train Truckers **10.0** Repair Lot **11.0** Storage Hunters UK **11.30** Storage Hunters UK **12.0** Celebrity Storage Hunters **1.0** Red Dwarf **1.40** Would I Lie to You? **2.20** Would I Lie to You? The Unseen Bits **3.0** Red Bull Soapbox Race 2018 **5.0** Red Bull Soapbox Race 2022 **7.0** QI XL **8.0** Not Going Out **9.0** Not Going Out **10.0** Mock the Week **10.40** Mock the Week **11.20** QI XL **12.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **1.0** QI XL **1.40** Schitt's Creek **2.10** Schitt's Creek **2.35** Schitt's Creek **3.0** Schitt's Creek **3.25** Schitt's Creek **4.0** Teleshopping

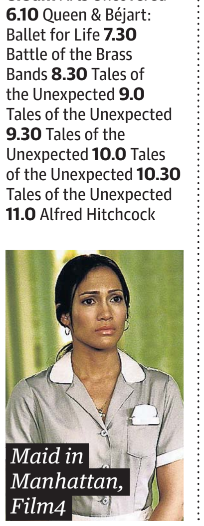
E4
6.0am Modern Family **6.30** Don't Tell the Bride **7.25** Don't Tell the Bride **8.30** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **9.30** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **10.30** Modern Family **12.55** The Great British Bake Off **2.30** FILM Kung Fu Panda 2 (2011) **4.20** The Big Bang Theory **4.50** The Big Bang Theory **5.20** The Big Bang Theory **5.50** The Big Bang Theory **6.20** The Big Bang Theory **6.50** The Big Bang Theory **7.20** FILM Men in Black II (2002) **9.0** Celebrity Gogglebox **10.0** Gogglebox **11.05** Gogglebox **12.05** First Dates **1.10** First Dates **2.15** Celebrity Gogglebox **3.10** Gogglebox **4.05** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **4.55** Ramsay's Hotel Hell

Film4
11.0am FILM Rugrats in Paris (2000) **12.35** FILM The Land That Time Forgot (1975) **2.25** FILM Little Monsters (1989) **4.15** FILM Now You See Me 2 (2016) **6.50** FILM Maid in Manhattan (2002) **9.0** FILM Anna (2019) **11.20** FILM Slice (2018) **1.0** FILM Sputnik (2020)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **9.35** Dress to Impress **12.35** Celebrity Supermarket Sweep **1.40** Celebrity Catchphrase **2.40** Family Fortunes **3.40** In for a Penny **4.10** FILM Dr Seuss' The Lorax (2012) **5.55** FILM How to Train Your Dragon 2 (2014) **8.0** FILM Shanghai Noon (2000) **10.15** Big Brother's Biggest Best Bits **11.15** Family Guy **11.45** Family Guy **12.10** American Dad! **12.40** American Dad! **1.05** The Stand Up Sketch Show **1.35** The Stand Up Sketch Show **2.10** Iain Stirling's CelebAbility **2.50** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** Dodo **5.15** Dodo **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max
6.0am Highway Patrol **6.30** Highway Patrol **7.0** Merlin **8.0** Merlin **9.0** Merlin **10.0** Merlin **11.0** Cobra **5.0** Hawaii Five-0 **6.0** Hawaii Five-0 **7.0** Hawaii Five-0 **8.0** A Discovery of Witches **9.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **9.45** Brassic **10.45** A League of Their Own Road Trip: Loch Ness to London **11.50** Warrior **1.0** Road Wars **2.0** The Blacklist **3.0** Jason Blum's Horror Movie Picks **3.15** Stop, Search, Seize **4.05** Send in the Dogs **5.0** Send in the Dogs

Sky Arts
6.0am Arts Uncovered **6.10** Queen & Béjart: Ballet for Life **7.30** Battle of the Brass Bands **8.30** Tales of the Unexpected **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.30** Tales of the Unexpected **11.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **12.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **12.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **1.0** FILM Pursuit to Algiers (1945) **2.20** Musical Masterpieces **3.20** André Rieu: La Vie Est Belle **5.0** Discovering: Ryan Gosling **6.0** Portrait Artist of the Decade **7.30** Kate Bush: Sensual World **8.0** Greatest Albums Live **9.0** Madness: Before and After **10.30** FILM Madness: The Get Up! (2021) **12.20** Suggs: My Life Story **2.25** Classic Albums **3.30** Classic Movies: The Story of Terminator 2: Judgment Day **4.30** Discovering: Little Richard **5.0** Buddy Holly: Music Icons **5.30** Jerry Lee Lewis: Music Icons



Maid in Manhattan, Film4

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Fish Town **7.0** Fish Town **8.0** Fish Town **9.0** Your Honor **10.05** Your Honor **11.10** Your Honor **12.15** Your Honor **1.20** Your Honor **2.25** Ray Donovan **3.30** Ray Donovan **4.35** Ray Donovan **5.40** Ray Donovan **6.45** Ray Donovan **7.55** Game of Thrones **1.25** Euphoria **2.35** Angels in America **4.0** Fish Town **5.0** The Guest Wing

Radio

Radio 3
7.0am Breakfast. With Martin Handley. **9.0** Record Review. Nigel Simeone's favourite recordings of Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade. **11.45** Music Matters. Conductor Semyon Bychkov discusses his life. **12.30** This Classical Life. With saxophonist Cassie Kinoshi. (R) **1.0** Inside Music. Soprano Golda Schultz chooses a selection of pieces. **3.0** Sound of Gaming. Elle Osili-Wood samples music from open-universe games. **4.0** Music Planet. Lopa Kothari looks ahead to the Darbar festival. **5.0** J to Z. With saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin in concert. (R) **6.30** Opera on 3. Antonio Pappano conducts Barrie Kosky's Royal Opera House production of Wagner's Das Rheingold, featuring Christopher Maltman (Wotan), Christopher Purves (Alberich), Sean Panikkar (Loge), Marina Prudenskaya (Fricka) and Kiandra Howarth (Freia). **10.0** New Music Show. Including DLW at the Witten festival. **12.0** Freeness. Music from Charlotte Keeffe's Right Here, Right Now Quartet. **1.0** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am News and Papers **6.07** Ramblings (R) **6.30** Farming Today This Week **6.57** Weather **7.0** Today **9.0** Saturday Live. With Kate Humble, Adam Rutherford and Tom Kerridge. **10.0** Your Place Or Mine. Nadiya Hussain persuades Shaun Keaveny to visit Sylhet, Bangladesh. (1/13) **10.30** My Dream Dinner Party. Actor Minnie Driver hosts a gathering with a twist. (3/3) **11.0** Reflections. Labour politician George Robertson reflects on his career. (R) **11.30** From Our Own Correspondent **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Money Box **12.30** The News Quiz (R) **12.57** Weather **1.0** News **1.10** Any Questions? (R) **2.0** Any Answers? **2.45** For Human Consumption (R) **3.0** Brick Lane. Tanika Gupta's dramatisation of Monica Ali's novel. (2/2) (R) **4.0** Weekend Woman's Hour **5.0** Saturday PM **5.30** Political Thinking With Nick Robinson (5/12) **5.54** Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.15** Loose Ends. Clive Anderson and Kiri Pritchard-McLean are joined by Bronte Barbe, Cath Staincliffe, John Whaite and Henry Normal. With music from Badly Drawn Boy and Swing Out Sister. **7.0** Profile **7.15** This Cultural Life. With choreographer Matthew Bourne. (9/13) **8.0** Archive on 4: The Cult of Lebowski. A look back at the Coen brothers' 1998 comedy The Big Lebowski. **9.0** Stone (5/5) (R) **9.45** Short Works. The Bubble Bursts, by Alex Preston. (R) **10.0** News **10.15** Screenshot. Fifty years of Don't Look Now. (R) **11.0** Brain of Britain (R) **11.30** Uncanny. Danny Robins investigates reports of supernatural activity. (2/12) **12.0** News **12.15** The New Harvest (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Bells on Sunday: The Church of St Ethelbert **5.45** Profile (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am My Cousin Rachel **7.30** The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths Omnibus (1-5/5) **8.45** Uncle Mort's South Country (4/5) **9.0** The Men from the Ministry **9.30** Something to Shout About (15/20) **10.0** The Real Comedy Controllers: The Things That Made Us Laugh **11.0** My Cousin Rachel **12.30** The Fens Omnibus **1.45** Uncle Mort's South Country (4/5) **2.0** The Men from the Ministry **2.30** Something to Shout About (15/20) **3.0** The Real Comedy Controllers: The Things That Made Us Laugh **4.0** The Yellow Wallpaper **4.45** Get Carter: The Bloody Chamber (4/5) **5.0** My Cousin Rachel **6.30** The Fens Omnibus **7.45** Uncle Mort's South Country (4/5) **8.0** The Men from the Ministry **8.30** Something to Shout About (15/20) **9.0** The Real Comedy Controllers: The Things That Made Us Laugh **10.0** The Mitch Benn Music Show (4/4) **10.30** John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme (5/6) **11.0** Big Problems With Helen Keen (3/4) **11.30** Seekers (4/6) **12.0** The Man in Black (4/5) **12.30** A Short History of Gothic (4/4) **1.0** My Cousin Rachel **2.30** The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths Omnibus **3.45** Uncle Mort's South Country (4/5) **4.0** The Men from the Ministry **4.30** Something to Shout About (15/20) **5.0** The Real Comedy Controllers: The Things That Made Us Laugh

Sunday



Boiling Point, BBC One

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **7.35** MOTD (T) (R) **9.0** Sunday (T) **10.0** Politics England (T) **10.30** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **11.30** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **12.10** Songs of Praise (T) **12.45** Points of View (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.10** Weather (T) **1.15** Gymnastics: World Championships (T) **2.45** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.15** FILM Big Hero 6 (2014) (T) **4.50** The Mating Game (T) (R) **5.50** News (T) **6.05** Regional News (T) **6.10** Weather (T) **6.15** Countryfile (T) **7.15** Strictly Come Dancing: The Results (T)

8.0 **Antiques Roadshow** (T) Fiona Bruce presents the show from Alexandra Gardens in Cardiff.

9.0 **Boiling Point** (T) It's new menu day at Point North and expectations are high for the chefs to deliver. Carly is forced to question the price of success after the pressure becomes too much.

10.0 **News;** (T)
10.25 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Match of the Day 2** (T) Arsenal v Man City and Brighton v Liverpool.
11.50 **The Women's Football Show** (T) Man City v Chelsea, Man United v Arsenal and Liverpool v Aston Villa.
12.35 **Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.40 **Countryfile** (T) (R) **7.35** Breakfast (T) **9.0** Weatherman Walking (T) **9.30** Landward (T) **10.0** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites (T) **11.30** Rick Stein's Seafood Odyssey (T) (R) **12.0** Nigel Slater's Simple Suppers (T) (R) **12.15** MOTD Live Women's Super League (T) Man City v Chelsea (kick-off 12.30pm). **2.45** Gymnastics: World Championships (T) **5.0** Super League (T) **6.0** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.20** Celebrity Race Across the World (T) (R) **7.20** **Eva Longoria: Searching for Mexico** (T)

8.0 **Big Little Journeys** (T) New series. The adventures of six tiny animals as they voyage into the unknown.

9.0 **Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing** (T) Bob and Paul return to the Peak District. Last in the series.

9.30 **Miriam Margolyes: Australia Unmasked** (T) (R) Miriam visits South Australia.

10.30 FILM **Licorice Pizza** (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2021) (T) A 25-year-old woman in 1973 LA meets a 15-year-old actor. Romantic comedy, starring Alana Haim and Cooper Hoffman.
12.35 **Sign Zone** Question Time (T) (R) **1.35** Claimed and Shamed (T) (R) **2.20** Ambulance (T) (R) **3.20** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Ainsley's Food We Love** (T) (R) **6.30** James Martin's French Adventure (T) (R) **7.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning (T) (R) **9.25** News (T) **9.30** Love Your Weekend With Alan Titchmarsh (T) **11.30** Rugby World Cup 2023 Live (T) Japan v Argentina (kick-off noon). **2.15** NFL Live (T) Buffalo Bills v Jacksonville Jaguars (kick-off 2.30pm). **6.0** Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals (T) (R) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **6.45** Local News and Weather (T) **6.55** Celebrity Catchphrase (T) (R)

7.55 **Beat the Chasers: Celebrity Special** (T) With Rory Bremner, Dana, Carlton Cole and Claire Richards.

9.0 **Big Brother: The Launch** (T) AJ Odudu and Will Best present as the reality contest returns, with a new cast of fame-hungry housemates hoping to reprise the show's glory years.

10.30 **News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Fresh Cuts** (T) Why black men are more likely to suffer from a mental health issue.
11.45 **The Savoy** (T) (R) Behind the scenes at the luxury hotel.
12.45 **EFL Highlights** (T) (R) **2.15** Winning Combination (T) (R) **3.05** Motorsport UK (T) (R) **3.55** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.10** Grand Slam Years (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.20 **Cheers** (T) (R) **7.15** The King of Queens (T) (R) **8.05** The Simpsons (T) (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch (T) **12.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **3.0** The Great British Bake Off (T) (R) **4.30** Coastal Railways With Julie Walters (T) (R) **5.35** A Lake District Farm Shop (T) (R) **6.30** News (T) **7.0** Griff's Canadian Adventure (T) (R)

8.0 **Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker** (T) Mel Giedroyc returns with the woodworking challenge.

9.0 **Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins** (T) The celebrities are tested on their mental and physical resilience, including an ascent up to a 200ft-deep cave, whose depths they're ordered to abseil into.

10.0 **Gogglebox** (T) (R)
11.0 **Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix Highlights** (T) Steve Jones presents action from the 18th round of the season.
1.25 **24 Hours in A&E** (T) (R) **2.20** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.10** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.20** Kirstie's House of Craft (T) (R) **5.40** Beat the Chef (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 10.20** Entertainment News (T) **10.30** NFL End Zone (T) **11.0** Friends (T) (R) **1.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **1.55** FILM The Hunt for Red October (John McTiernan, 1990) (T) **4.35** FILM Ocean's Thirteen (Steven Soderbergh, 2007) (T) **7.0** ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 (T) India v Australia.

8.0 **Hotel Benidorm: Fun-Loving Brits in the Sun** (T) The Plaza is full to bursting and a hen party arrives.

9.0 **Inheritance Wars: Who Gets the Money?** (T) A widow who took on the Ministry of Defence in an eight-year battle after her partner died just before they were due to marry. Last in the series.

10.0 **The Big Sex Scam** (T) A look at how Carol Goodall fell prey to a serial conman.
10.55 **Strip: Getting Naked for Money** (T) Documentary.
11.55 **Sex Made Millionaires** (T) (R)
1.0 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.0** Queens of Pop (T) (R) **4.35** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.0** House Busters (T) (R) **5.35** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Gregory Doran Remembers: Shakespeare Live! From the RSC** (T) The former artistic director of the RSC recalls the company's 2016 Shakespeare celebration.

7.15 **Shakespeare Live! From the RSC** (T) (R) David Tennant, Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Meera Syal, Joseph Fiennes, Rufus Wainwright, Akala and Tim Minchin celebrate the life, work and legacy of William Shakespeare at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2016.

9.40 **Much Ado About Nothing** (T) (R) Filmed performance of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the comedy. Directed by Roy Alexander Weise and starring Akiya Henry and Luke Wilson.
12.25 **The Wars of the Roses: Edward IV** (R) The RSC's staging of the bard's Wars of the Roses plays from 1964.

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm EastEnders **7.30** EastEnders **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **9.30** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **10.0** FILM **Candyman** (2021) **11.25** Man Like Mobeen **11.50** Man Like Mobeen **12.15** Juice **12.40** Juice **1.10** BBC New Comedy Awards **1.40** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **2.45** The After Shave With Danny Beard **3.0** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **3.30** The Fast and the Farmer-ish

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Big Zuu's Big Eats **7.35** Big Zuu's Big Eats **8.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **8.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **9.0** Abandoned Engineering **10.0** Abandoned Engineering **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Top Gear **1.0** Top Gear **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy **3.30** Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy **4.0** Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy **4.30** Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy **5.0** Red Bull Soapbox Race: USA's Greatest Moments **7.0** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **7.40** The Lakes With Simon Reeve **8.40** QI XL **9.20** QI XL **10.0** Live at the Apollo **11.0** Big Zuu's Big Eats **11.40** QI XL **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Red Dwarf **1.55** Red Dwarf **2.35** Live at the Apollo **3.25** Big Zuu's Big Eats **4.0** Teleshopping

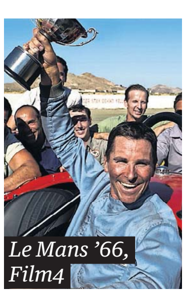
E4
6.0am Hollyoaks Omnibus **8.30** Married at First Sight UK **9.30** Married at First Sight UK **10.35** Married at First Sight UK **11.35** Married at First Sight UK **12.50** Young Sheldon **1.20** Young Sheldon **1.45** Young Sheldon **2.15** Young Sheldon **2.40** Young Sheldon **3.10** FILM Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (2008) **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.55** FILM Men in Black 3 (2012) **9.0** FILM Venom (2018) **11.05** Gogglebox **12.10** Gogglebox **1.15** First Dates **2.15** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **3.05** Modern Family **3.30** Hollyoaks Omnibus

Film4
11.0am FILM Barnyard (2006) **12.45** FILM The Ten Commandments (1956) **5.15** FILM Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging (2008) **7.10** FILM The Golden Child (1986) **9.0** FILM Le Mans '66 (2019) **12.05** FILM Stuber (2019) **1.55** FILM Second Act (2018)

ITV2
6.0am CITV: Craig of the Creek **6.10** Teen Titans Go! **6.25** Teen Titans Go! **6.40** Teen Titans Go! **6.50** Looney Tunes Cartoons **7.05** Looney Tunes Cartoons **7.15** Looney Tunes Cartoons **7.30** Looney Tunes Cartoons **7.45** Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! **8.10** What's New Scooby-Doo? **8.35** Scooby-Doo and Guess Who? **9.0** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **9.35** Dress to Impress **10.35** Dress to Impress **11.35** Next Level Chef (USA) **12.30** Supermarket Sweep **1.30** Celebrity Catchphrase **2.30** In for a Penny **3.05** FILM Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween (2018) **4.55** FILM Despicable Me 3 (2017) **6.45** FILM Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again (2018) **9.0** Big Brother: The Launch **10.30** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.35** Family Guy **12.0** Family Guy **12.30** Family Guy **1.0** American Dad! **1.30** American Dad! **2.0** American Dad! **2.25** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.50** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** CITV

Sky Max
6.0am NCIS: Los Angeles **11.0** Cobra: Cyberwar **5.0** Merlin **6.0** Merlin **7.0** Merlin **8.0** Merlin **9.0** Rob & Romesh vs Team GB: Part 1 **10.0** The Blacklist **11.0** Jason Blum's Horror Movie Picks **11.15** FILM Saw IV (2007) **1.15** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **2.0** An Idiot Abroad 2 **3.0** The Force: North East **4.0** Send in the Dogs **5.0** Sun, Sea and A&E

Sky Arts
6.0am FILM Jesus Christ Superstar: Live in Concert (2018) **7.50** Spielberg and Williams: The Adventure Continues **8.20** Tales of the Unexpected **8.55** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.30** Tales of the Unexpected **11.0** The Joy of Painting **11.30** The Joy of Painting **12.0** The Joy of Painting: Musical Masterpieces **1.0** Discovering: Ryan Gosling **2.0** Portrait Artist of the Decade **3.30** Comedy Legends **4.30** Frank Sinatra: Welcome Home Elvis **5.45** Elvis '56 Special **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** FILM Pursuit to Algiers (1945) **9.20** Classic Movies: The Story of Terminator 2: Judgment Day **10.20** Discovering: Ryan Gosling **11.20** FILM The Grateful Dead (1977) **1.50** Brian Johnson's A Life on the Road **2.50** Isle of Wight Festival Greatest Hits **3.20** Blondie: Song By Song **3.45** Blondie: Song By Song **4.10** Blondie: Song By Song **4.35** Blondie: Song By Song **5.0** Cream: Music Icons **5.30** Dusty Springfield: Music Icons



Le Mans '66, Film4

Sky Atlantic
6.0am The Guest Wing **10.0** Your Honor **3.30** Ray Donovan **4.35** Ray Donovan **5.40** Ray Donovan **6.45** Ray Donovan **7.50** Ray Donovan **9.0** Domina **10.05** Domina **11.15** Dreamland **11.45** Chernobyl **12.55** True Detective **3.15** Tin Star **4.15** The Guest Wing

Radio

Radio 3
7.0am Breakfast **9.0** Sunday Morning **12.0** Private Passions. Michael Berkeley is joined by theoretical physicist Fay Dowker. **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Monday's Wigmore Hall recital, with violinist Tai Murray and pianist Silke Avenhaus playing Elgar's Violin Sonata and Szymanowski's Myths. (R) **2.0** The Early Music Show. Ex Corde perform sacred and secular music by William Byrd. **3.0** Choral Evensong. From the Old Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, London. (R) **4.0** Jazz Record Requests **5.0** The Listening Service. Tom Service explores the ethereal in music. **5.30** Words and Music. A sequence of poetry, prose and music on the theme of wind. **6.45** Between the Ears. Aidan Tulloch explores the transformative space where people become performers. **7.15** Sunday Feature: The Temple of Mithras at Hadrian's Wall - Past and Present. Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough visits a temple built by Roman soldiers in Northumberland. **7.30** Drama on 3: The Miser. Barunka O'Shaughnessy's adaptation of Molière's play. (R) **9.0** Record Review Extra **11.0** African Classical Music. Tunde Jegede celebrates a variety of African classical traditions. (1/3) **12.0** Classical Fix **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am News **6.05** Something Understood. Turning waste into something positive. (R) **6.35** On Your Farm. The first finalist in the BBC Food and Farming awards, a fruit and veg co-operative in Sheffield. (1/9) **6.57** Weather **7.0** News **7.0** Sunday Papers **7.10** Sunday **7.54** Radio 4 Appeal: Ashden **7.57** Weather **8.0** News **8.0** Sunday Papers **8.10** Sunday Worship **8.48** A Point of View (R) **8.58** Tweet of the Day (R) **9.0** Broadcasting House **10.0** The Archers: Omnibus (R) **11.15** Desert Island Discs (4/15) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz (R) **12.30** The Food Programme. Jaega Wise investigates fermented tea. **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World This Weekend **1.30** Izabela in the Forest. A soundscape of the Bialowieza primeval forest. **2.0** Gardeners' Question Time (R) **2.45** Opening Lines **3.0** Lark Rise to Ambridge. Katie Hims's dramatisation of Flora Thompson's Lark Rise to Candleford stories. (2/2) **4.0** Open Book **4.30** Rethinking Music (R) **5.0** File on 4. The training of security staff against terrorist activities. (R) **5.40** Profile (R) **5.54** Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.15** Pick of the Week **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Agendum. Current affairs spoof, starring Carrie Quinlan. (R) **7.45** Moving Mountains. Tomasz, by Jan Carson. (3/5) **8.0** More Or Less (R) **8.30** Last Word (R) **9.0** Money Box (R) **9.25** Radio 4 Appeal: Ashden (R) **9.30** Loose Ends (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The Westminster Hour **11.0** The Moral Maze (R) **12.0** News **12.15** Thinking Allowed (R) **12.45** Bells on Sunday (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Poetry Extra **6.30** Ricky Omnibus (1-5/5) **7.40** Inheritance Tracks **7.50** Madame Bovary Omnibus: Part Two (6-10/10) **9.0** A Life of Bliss **9.30** Home to Roost (5/6) **10.0** Desert Island Discs **10.45** David Attenborough's Life Stories **11.0** Poetry Extra **11.30** Ricky Omnibus **12.40** Inheritance Tracks **12.50** Madame Bovary Omnibus: Part Two **2.0** A Life of Bliss **2.30** Home to Roost (5/6) **3.0** Desert Island Discs **3.45** David Attenborough's Life Stories **4.0** The Man in Black (4/5) **4.30** A Short History of Gothic (4/4) **5.0** Poetry Extra **5.30** Ricky Omnibus **6.40** Inheritance Tracks **6.50** Madame Bovary Omnibus: Part Two **8.0** A Life of Bliss **8.30** Home to Roost (5/6) **9.0** Desert Island Discs **9.45** David Attenborough's Life Stories **10.0** Start/Stop (2/6) **10.30** Tim Key's Late Night Poetry Programme (1/4) **11.0** Andy Hamilton Sort of Remembers (2/4) **11.30** Clayton Grange (2/4) **12.0** Poetry Extra **12.30** Ricky Omnibus **1.40** Inheritance Tracks **1.50** Madame Bovary Omnibus: Part Two **3.0** A Life of Bliss **3.30** Home to Roost (5/6) **4.0** Desert Island Discs **4.45** David Attenborough's Life Stories **5.0** Baldi (5/6) **5.45** Short Works

Monday



The Long Shadow, ITV1

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Caught Red Handed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** The Repair Shop (T) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Panorama** (T) The Big Mortgage Squeeze.
8.30 **Scarlett's Driving School** (T) A learner has a meltdown on a dual carriageway.
9.0 **The Reckoning** (T) New series. Factual drama examining the crimes of Jimmy Savile, featuring testimony from his survivors. Starring Steve Coogan.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Have I Got a Bit More News for You** (T) (R) Victoria Coren Mitchell is guest host.
11.25 **The Graham Norton Show** (T) (R) With Catherine Tate, Bill Bailey and Bernie Taupin.
12.15 **Alan Carr's Picture Slam** (T) **1.0** Weather for the Week Ahead. (T) **1.05** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Bargain Hunt** (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: This Farming Life (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **11.30** Politics Live Conference 2023 (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under (T) (R) **3.0** Murder, Mystery and My Family (T) (R) **3.45** This Wild Life (T) (R) **4.15** Serengeti III (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T) **7.0** The Crash Detectives (T) **7.30** Mastermind (T)

8.0 **Only Connect** (T) Victoria Coren Mitchell hosts.
8.30 **University Challenge** (T) Lincoln College, Oxford takes on King's College London.
9.0 **Union With David Olusoga** (T) The historian explores how a new British identity was forged in the face of multiple threats and almost constant war with France.

10.0 **Sandylands** (T) As Les plots his escape, Tina discovers he is still alive. Last in the series.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather.
11.15 FILM **Don't Look Now** (Nicolas Roeg, 1973) (T) Supernatural thriller.
1.05 **Sign Zone** Countryfile (T) (R) **2.0** Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast (T) (R) **3.0** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) Stephen plans his escape from the cobbles.
9.0 **The Long Shadow** (T) The investigation spreads to Bradford with the murder of another woman, a female police officer takes on treacherous undercover work, and danger is ever-present for sex workers.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Peston** (T) Political chat.
11.40 **Hotel Custody** (T) (R) A full moon stirs up strange behaviour in Grimsby.
12.30 **All Elite Wrestling** (T) (R) **2.10** Tipping Point (T) (R) **3.0** Waco Untold: The British Stories (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.10** Tenable (T)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Jimmy Doherty's New Zealand Escape** (T) The presenter meets market gardeners who have put the country's produce on the map. Last in the series.
9.0 **999: On the Front Line** (T) A category one call comes through for a man bleeding from his ears. But how did he get these injuries?

10.0 **My Dead Body** (T) (R)
11.15 **First Dates** (T) (R)
12.15 **Sex Rated** (T) (R) **1.10** The Great British Bake Off: An Extra Slice (T) (R) **2.05** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **2.50** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **3.40** The Great Pottery Throw Down (T) (R) **4.45** The Great Home Transformation (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Happily Never After (Sarah Cayce, 2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders (T) (R)

8.0 **The Motorway** (T) The patrollers face off with a flock of escaped sheep.
9.0 **Endurance: Race to the Pole With Ben Fogle** (T) The presenter and Dwayne Fields tackle the trials faced by Ernest Shackleton on his Nimrod expedition – the explorer's second foray into the great white wilderness.

10.0 **Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts** (T) (R)
11.05 **Ambulance: Code Red** (T) (R)
12.0 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) New Zealand v Netherlands. **1.0** Live NFL: Monday Night Football (T) Las Vegas Raiders v Green Bay Packers. **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.05** House Busters (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Life** (T) (R) How plants adapt to their environment.

8.0 **Simon Schama's Power of Art** (T) (R) How eight masterpieces were created, beginning with Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's David With the Head of Goliath.
9.0 **Andy Warhol's America** (T) (R) A look at the artist's response to the civil rights movement in the US.

10.0 **The Sky at Night: Question Time Special** (T) A question-and-answer edition from the University of Exeter.
11.0 **Nelson in His Own Words** (T) (R) Docudrama based on Horatio Nelson's personal correspondence.
12.0 **The Stuarts** (T) (R) **1.0** Basquiat: Rage to Riches (T) (R) **2.30** Life (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Love, Victor **8.30** Love, Victor **8.55** Laugh Lessons **9.0** Leigh-Anne: Race, Pop & Power **10.0** FILM Licorice Pizza (2021) **12.05** The Bold Type **12.45** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **1.55** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.25** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.55** Leigh-Anne: Race, Pop & Power

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Big Zuu's Big Eats **7.35** Big Zuu's Big Eats **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Inside the Factory: How Our Favourite Foods Are Made **11.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Repair Lot **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Pointless **5.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **5.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **6.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI **10.0** Big Zuu's Big Eats **10.40** Mock the Week **11.20** QI XL **12.0** QI XL **1.0** Mock the Week **1.40** Would I Lie to You? **2.15** Richard Osman's House of Games **2.45** Dead Canny **3.30** Beat the Internet With John Robins **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Don't Tell the Bride **8.0** Melissa & Joey **8.30** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Teen First Dates **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.05** Made in Chelsea **11.05** Gogglebox **12.10** First Dates **1.15** Married at First Sight UK **2.20** Made in Chelsea **3.15** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **4.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.55** Black-ish **5.20** Black-ish

Film4

11.0am FILM The Bells of St Mary's (1945) **1.35** FILM Dragoon Wells Massacre (1957) **3.20** FILM Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970) **6.20** FILM Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (2003) **9.0** FILM A Time to Kill (1996) **12.0** FILM Locke (2013) **1.45** FILM The Vigil (2019)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow: Celebrity Special **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.05** Family Guy **12.35** Family Guy **1.05** American Dad! **1.30** Bob's Burgers **2.20** Shopping With Keith Lemon **2.45** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max

6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** There's Something About Movies **9.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **9.45** Brassic **10.45** Fantasy Island **12.45** Cobra: Cyberwar **2.45** Road Wars **3.10** Hawaii Five-0 **4.05** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am An Evening With Il Divo **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Joseph Cotten **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs **3.0** Boswell & Johnson's Scottish Road Trip **4.0** Discovering: Daniel Day-Lewis **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Musical Masterpieces **9.0** André Rieu: Live in Sydney **12.0** Roy Orbison Forever **1.15** Johnny Cash Live at Montreux **2.35** Rosamund Pike: Off Camera **3.45** National Trust: National Treasures **5.0** The South Bank Show



Leigh-Anne: Race, Pop & Power, BBC Three

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Knick **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** Chernobyl **10.10** The Lovers **10.50** Angels in America **12.20** True Detective **1.30** Billions **2.35** Game of Thrones **3.45** In Treatment **4.15** The Guest Wing

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Fauré (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Live from London's Wigmore Hall, pianist Wayne Marshall performs an entirely improvised concert. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Ryan Wigglesworth conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Elgar's Second Symphony in E flat. Plus music by Wagner, Coleridge-Taylor and Debussy. **4.30** New Generation Artists. Geneva Lewis plays Fazil Say's Violin Sonata. **5.0** In Tune. Violinist Maxim Rysanov performs live in the studio. **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Michael Schønwandt conducts the Orchestre National de Montpellier and mezzo Karine Deshayes in Horneman's Aladdin: Ouverture, Berlioz's Les Nuits d'été and Schoenberg's Pelléas et Mélisande. **10.0** Music Matters (R) **10.45** The Essay: The Lost Hours. Andrew Martin reflects on elevenses. (R) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Start the Week. A discussion on the current state of Israel. **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Going Infinite. By Michael Lewis. (1/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Gift. How life can change when a DIY DNA test reveals a serious illness. (5/6) **11.30** The Bottom Line (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** An Almanac of Anxiety: In Search of a Calmer Mind (R) **2.0** The Archers **2.15** This Cultural Life. With choreographer Matthew Bourne. (R) **3.0** Brain of Britain (9/17) **3.30** The Food Programme (R) **4.0** History's Secret Heroes. The story of a bank worker from Surrey who joined MI5 to hunt Nazi sympathisers. (R) **4.30** The Digital Human. How to make sure AI humans serve the needs of their makers. (1/6) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz. Paul tests an audience in Brighton on their local knowledge. (6/10) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The 93% Club. Sophie Pender explores state school students' place in wider society. **8.30** Analysis. Paul Johnson explores the challenges facing the UK economy. (2/8) **9.0** Young Again (R) **9.30** Start the Week. **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Open Throat. By Henry Hoke. (1/5) **11.0** Sound Towns. A history of Bristol's unique music scene. (R) **11.30** Three Faces of WH Auden (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week: Going Infinite (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Project Archangel (3/4) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (2/6) **7.0** The Camomile Lawn (1/10) **7.15** Ground Control (1/5) **7.30** Alexei Sayle's Imaginary Sandwich Bar (4/4) **8.0** Steptoe and Son (2/8) **8.30** Semi Circles (4/6) **9.0** It's Your Round (4/6) **9.30** Snap (2/6) **10.0** Baldi (5/6) **10.45** Short Works **11.0** Project Archangel (3/4) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (2/6) **12.0** The Camomile Lawn (1/10) **12.15** Ground Control (1/5) **12.30** Alexei Sayle's Imaginary Sandwich Bar (4/4) **1.0** Steptoe and Son (2/8) **1.30** Semi Circles (4/6) **2.0** It's Your Round (4/6) **2.30** Snap (2/6) **3.0** Baldi (5/6) **3.45** Short Works **4.0** Project Archangel (3/4) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (2/6) **5.0** The Camomile Lawn (1/10) **5.15** Ground Control (1/5) **5.30** Alexei Sayle's Imaginary Sandwich Bar (4/4) **6.0** Steptoe and Son (2/8) **6.30** Semi Circles (4/6) **7.0** It's Your Round (4/6) **7.30** Snap (2/6) **8.0** The Other Side of the Dial **9.0** Mastertapes (1/10) **9.30** Journey Into Space: The Red Planet (1/20) **10.0** Comedy Club: Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz (5/10) **10.30** Brian Gulliver's Travels (1/6) **11.0** The News Quiz (5/8) **11.30** Lee and Herring's Fist of Fun (6/6) **12.0** Baldi (5/6) **12.45** Short Works **1.0** Project Archangel (3/4) **1.30** High Table, Lower Orders (2/6) **2.0** The Camomile Lawn (1/10) **2.15** Ground Control (1/5) **2.30** Alexei Sayle's Imaginary Sandwich Bar (4/4) **3.0** Steptoe and Son (2/8) **3.30** Semi Circles (4/6) **4.0** It's Your Round (4/6) **4.30** Snap (2/6) **5.0** Baldi (6/6) **5.45** The Rainbow

Tuesday



The TikTok Effect, BBC One

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Caught Red Handed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** The Repair Shop (T) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 Fake Or Fortune? (T) Fiona Bruce and Philip Mould travel to France to investigate two pieces of art believed to be by Pissarro and Cézanne.

9.0 The Reckoning (T) At the height of his fame, Jimmy Savile creates more opportunities for charity work to further conceal his abusive behaviour.

10.0 News (T)
10.30 Regional News (T) Weather
10.40 The TikTok Effect (T) (R) Marianna Spring investigates evidence that unusual behaviour on TikTok has started spilling out into the real world.
11.35 Michael McIntyre's The Wheel (T) (R)
12.35 Weather (T) **12.40** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Money for Nothing (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Expert Witness (T) (R) **8.30** Robson Green's Weekend Escapes (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Politics Live Conference 2023 (T) **3.45** This Wild Life (T) (R) **4.15** Serengeti III (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T) **7.0** Celebrity Antiques Road Trip (T)

8.0 This Farming Life (T) Rachel and Camy prepare to welcome this year's lambs.

9.0 Why Sharks Attack (T) (R) A documentary investigating recent shark behaviour following three fatal attacks in Egypt, and whether pressure from human activity and the climate crisis could be the cause.

10.0 Jailed: Inside Maghaberry Prison (T) Documentary on the Northern Ireland jail.
10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.15 FILM **The Last Black Man in San Francisco** (2019) (T)
1.10 Sign Zone Money for Nothing (T) (R) **1.55** DNA Family Secrets (T) (R) **2.55** Gone Fishing (T) (R) **3.25** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 The Martin Lewis Money Show Live: Britain Get Talking Special (T) Advice for those in financial difficulty.

8.30 Susanna Reid: Can Britain Get Talking? A Tonight Special (T) What can be done to help children's mental health.

9.0 The Real Crown: Inside the House of Windsor (T) Charles and Andrew find wives.

10.0 News (T) Weather
10.30 Local News (T) Weather
10.45 Martin Clunes: A Dog Called Laura (T) (R)
11.40 The Grand Fishing Adventure (T) (R)
12.30 The Chase (T) (R) **1.20** Tipping Point (T) (R) **2.10** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.0** Fresh Cuts (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Tenable (R)

Channel 4

6.05 Countdown (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 The Great British Bake Off (T) The bakers face bread week, beginning with a classic cottage loaf before making a plaited centrepiece.

9.30 Don't Look Down for SU2C (T) New series. Paddy McGuinness leads a team of celebrities in an attempt to master the highwire in aid of Stand Up To Cancer.

10.30 Gogglebox (T) (R) The armchair critics share their thoughts on TV.
12.35 Walter Presents: Carmen Curlers (T) **1.35** FILM Pixie (Barnaby Thompson, 2020) (T) Crime comedy. **3.05** Partygate (T) (R) **4.20** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.10** The Great Home Transformation (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! 9.15 Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM I Will Take Your Life! (Alexandre Carrière, 2020) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 (T) Highlights of England v Bangladesh.

8.0 The Yorkshire Vet (T) Shona Searson operates on a cow struggling to walk because of an infected hoof.

9.0 The Hotel Inspector (T) New series. Alex Polizzi stops a wannabe hotelier from losing everything before she's even opened the door, as Claire tries to launch a bar and hotel in Redcar.

10.0 Wayne Couzens: Killer in Plain Sight (T) (R) Documentary about the serving police officer who murdered Sarah Everard.
11.30 Cricket World Cup 2023 (T)
12.30 Traffic Cops (T) (R) **1.30** Live Casino Show (T) **3.30** Warship: Life at Sea (T) (R) **5.05** House Busters (T) (R) **5.35** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 Life (T) (R) The focus turns to apes and monkeys.

8.0 Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em (T) (R) Frank takes Betty to the maternity clinic.

8.30 Yes Minister (T) (R) Jim makes a disturbing discovery.

9.0 The Nation's Railway: The Golden Age of British Rail (T) (R) How British Rail transformed the network, changing from steam to diesel and electric engines.

10.0 Made of Steel: Wheelchair Rugby's Fiercest Rivalry (T) The story of the world's two best wheelchair rugby league teams, England and France.
11.20 Imagine: Malorie Blackman – What If? (T) (R) Writer profile.
12.30 Imagine: Lenny Henry – Young, Gifted and Black (T) (R) **1.45** Life (T) (R) **2.45** Andy Warhol's America (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Love, Victor **8.25** Love, Victor **8.55** Ryan Tricks on the Streets **9.0** Soldier **10.0** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **10.30** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **11.0** Peacock **11.25** The Bold Type **12.05** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **12.35** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **1.05** BBC New Comedy Awards **1.35** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.05** Top Gear **3.05** My Mate's a Bad Date **3.30** Peacock

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Big Zuu's Big Eats **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Inside the Factory: How Our Favourite Foods Are Made **11.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Repair Lot **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Pointless **5.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **6.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **12.0** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **1.0** Mock the Week **1.40** Meet the Richardsons **2.15** Meet the Richardsons **2.45** Perfect **3.30** Beat the Internet With John Robins **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.05** 8 Out of 10 Cats **11.05** Abbott Elementary **11.35** Naked Attraction **12.40** First Dates **1.45** Married at First Sight UK **2.40** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **3.30** Abbott Elementary **3.55** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.20** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.45** Black-ish **5.10** Black-ish

Film4

11.0am FILM Ministry of Fear (1944) **12.45** FILM Hobson's Choice (1953) **2.55** FILM Captain Scarlett (1953) **4.30** FILM The Black Shield of Falworth (1954) **6.30** FILM Hidden Figures (2016) **9.0** FILM Mission: Impossible - Fallout (2018) **11.55** FILM Filth (2013) **1.50** FILM Why Him? (2016)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow: Celebrity Special **8.0** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Big Brother **10.0** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.05** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.30** American Dad! **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Bob's Burgers **1.55** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.35** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max

6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own Road Trip: Loch Ness to London **9.0** A Discovery of Witches **10.0** Rob & Romesh vs Team GB: Part 1 **11.0** Brassic **12.0** The Blacklist **1.0** Road Wars **2.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **2.45** Road Wars **3.10** Hawaii Five-0 **4.05** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Three Tenors: From Caracalla to the World **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Daniel Day-Lewis **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **3.0** The Art Mysteries **4.0** Portrait Artist of the Decade **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Van Gogh & Japan **9.0** FILM Freddie Mercury: The Untold Story (2000) **10.15** shortFLIX Presents Seven Sisters **10.30** The Movies **11.30** Discovering: Ryan Gosling **12.30** Soundtracks: Songs That Defined History **1.30** Discovering: Meat Loaf **2.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2023 **3.0** The Art of the Joy of Sex **4.0** Film Noir **5.0** The South Bank Show



Hidden Figures, Film4

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Knick **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Lovers **9.35** Billions **10.40** Tin Star **11.40** True Detective **12.50** Billions **2.0** Das Boot **4.0** The Guest Wing

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Fauré (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Pianist Federico Colli plays Bach's Italian Concerto, the Fourth Partita, and Ferruccio Busoni's transcription of the Chaconne from Bach's Partita No 2 in D minor for solo violin. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Tito Muñoz conducts the BBC SSO in Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. Plus, music by Wagner and Schnittke. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Santtu-Matias Rouvali conducts the Philharmonia, pianist Seong-Jin Cho and trumpeter Jason Evans in Sibelius's Symphony No 6 in D minor, Op 104, and Shostakovich's Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings, and Symphony No 6 in B minor, Op 54. **10.0** Free Thinking. With artist Mat Collishaw, composer Jimmy López Bellido and academic Vid Simoniti. **10.45** The Essay: The Lost Hours. Andrew Martin muses on lunch. (R) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

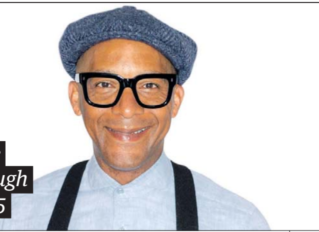
Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Building Soul With Thomas Heatherwick. Why Le Corbusier is responsible for the age of boring buildings. (2/3) **9.30** How to Win a Campaign (3/5) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Going Infinite. By Michael Lewis. (2/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Young Again. Kirsty Young finds out what Daniel Kaluuya would say to his younger self. (2/6) **11.30 Poet Laureate in the Arctic** Simon Armitage visits the polar region. (1/4) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Call You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** An Almanac of Anxiety: In Search of a Calmer Mind (R) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Trust. Drama, by Jonathan Hall. (1/3) **3.0** Short Cuts. Documentaries about our imaginations for collecting histories. (4/9) **3.30** Lady Killers With Lucy Worsley. Florence Bravo, who was believed to have poisoned her husband in 1876. (R) **4.0** The Mandates (2/3) **4.30** A Good Read. With Rhys Stephenson and Esther Manito. (2/9) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Best Medicine. Virtual reality injections, sobriety and trust. (2/11) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** File on 4 (2/4) **8.40** In Touch **9.0** Inside Health (4/6) **9.30** Building Soul (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Open Throat (2/5) **11.0** Call Jonathan Pie. Pie does drugs on his phone-in show. (8/10) **11.30** Lusus. Keri and Barden find their perfect city centre flat has a bird problem. (5/8) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Project Archangel (4/4) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (3/6) **7.0** The Camomile Lawn (2/10) **7.15** Ground Control (2/5) **7.30** Showstopper (5/6) **8.0** The Goon Show (14/17) **8.30** Growing Pains (3/6) **9.0** The Motion Show (5/6) **9.30** On Baby Street (4/5) **10.0** Baldi (6/6) **10.45** The Rainbow **11.0** Project Archangel (4/4) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (3/6) **12.0** The Camomile Lawn (2/10) **12.15** Ground Control (2/5) **12.30** Showstopper (5/6) **1.0** The Goon Show (14/17) **1.30** Growing Pains (3/6) **2.0** The Motion Show (5/6) **2.30** On Baby Street (4/5) **3.0** Baldi (6/6) **3.45** The Rainbow **4.0** Project Archangel (4/4) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (3/6) **5.0** The Camomile Lawn (2/10) **5.15** Ground Control (2/5) **5.30** Showstopper (5/6) **6.0** The Goon Show (14/17) **6.30** Growing Pains (3/6) **7.0** The Motion Show (5/6) **7.30** On Baby Street (4/5) **8.0** TED Radio Hour **8.50** Inheritance Tracks **9.0** Mastertapes (2/10) **9.30** Journey Into Space: The Red Planet (2/20) **10.0** Best Medicine (1/11) **10.30** Cliche **11.0** The Pin (1/4) **11.30** ElvenQuest (3/6) **12.0** Baldi (6/6) **12.45** The Rainbow **1.0** Project Archangel (4/4) **1.30** High Table, Lower Orders (3/6) **2.0** The Camomile Lawn (2/10) **2.15** Ground Control (2/5) **2.30** Showstopper (5/6) **3.0** The Goon Show (14/17) **3.30** Growing Pains (3/6) **4.0** The Motion Show (5/6) **4.30** On Baby Street (4/5) **5.0** Piaf and Cocteau **5.45** The Other Girl

Wednesday


Jay Blades: The Midlands Through Time, Channel 5

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Caught Red Handed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** The Repair Shop (T) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **6.55** Party Political Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 The Repair Shop (T) (R) The team take on two dolls, a drum kit, a painted German toy box and the oldest ever item to enter the barn.

9.0 Celebrity Race Across the World (T) Budgets dwindle as the teams leave western Europe and set off to the next checkpoint in Sarajevo, travelling 1,200km.

10.0 News (T)
10.30 Regional News (T) Weather
10.40 FILM **Get Out** (Jordan Peele, 2017) (T) A photographer visits his girlfriend's family home but suspects there is more there than meets the eye. Thriller, starring Daniel Kaluuya and Allison Williams.
12.20 Blankety Blank (T) (R) **12.55** Weather (T) **1.0** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Escape to the Country (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Great Coastal Railway Journeys (T) (R) **8.30** Tales from a Kitchen Garden (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under (T) (R) **3.0** Murder, Mystery and My Family (T) **3.45** This Wild Life (T) (R) **4.15** Serengeti III (T) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T) **7.0** Celebrity Antiques Road Trip (T)

8.0 Nadiya's Simple Spices (T) The cook prepares her family's chicken curry.

8.30 Nigella: At My Table (T) (R) Nigella Lawson makes herbed leg of lamb with roast potatoes.

9.0 DNA Family Secrets (T) A woman left wrapped in a plastic bag as a baby wants to find her birth parents.

10.0 Moulin Rouge: Yes We Can-Can! (T) Documentary.
10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.15 Unspun World With John Simpson (T) News review.
11.45 Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast (T) (R)
12.45 Sign Zone Garden Rescue (T) (R) **1.30** Clean It, Fix It (T) (R) **2.15** Union (T) (R) **3.15** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.20** Party Political Broadcast (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 Coronation Street (T) Sally starts to panic when Kevin tells her that Tim did not go to the match with him and Kirk.

9.0 Payback (T) Feeling increasingly isolated and deceived, Lexie is left with no choice but to help crime boss Cal Morris with a secret business transaction.

10.0 News (T) Weather
10.30 Local News (T) Weather
10.45 Breaking Through With Zeze Millz (T) Panel show.
11.15 Sorry, I Didn't Know (T) (R)
11.40 No Return (T) (R)
12.30 The Chase (T) (R) **1.20** Tipping Point (T) (R) **2.10** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.0** What Are We Eating? (T) (R) **3.25** Good Mood Food (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 Countdown (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 Geordie Hospital (T) Neurosurgeon Claire operates on Jen who has spina bifida.

9.0 Grand Designs (T) Kevin McCloud returns to Gloucestershire to see the progress made by Jon and Noreen, who set out to build a three-bed treehouse on a budget of £250,000.

10.0 Britain's Most Expensive Houses (T) (R)
11.05 The Great British Bake Off (T)
12.35 Taskmaster (T) (R) **1.30** Handmade (T) (R) **2.25** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.15** New Zealand Escape (T) (R) **4.10** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.05** Escape to the Chateau (T) (R) **5.10** Tool Club (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! 9.15 Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Killer Design (David DeCoteau, 2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Tesco: How Do They Really Do It? (T)

8.0 Norfolk and Suffolk: Country & Coast (T) Campsite and restaurant owners along the River Deben gather the produce they will serve for breakfast and lunch.

9.0 Jay Blades: The Midlands Through Time (T) New series. The presenter explores the extraordinary history of the West Midlands.

10.0 999: Critical Condition (T)
11.05 ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 (T) India v Afghanistan.
12.05 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Warship (T) (R) **3.50** The Funny Thing About Growing Up (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.0** House Busters (T) (R) **5.35** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 Africa (T) (R) David Attenborough explores the continent's wildlife and landscape.

8.0 Universe (T) (R) Prof Brian Cox explores how cutting-edge space missions have revealed the origin of the universe and how humankind came to be here.

9.0 Charles I: Downfall of a King (T) (R) Lisa Hilton relates how Charles I plotted to arrest John Pym and his colleagues.

10.0 Cardiac Arrest (T) (R) A new student nurse attracts Raj's attentions.
10.30 Cardiac Arrest (T) (R)
11.0 Cardiac Arrest (T) (R)
11.30 Cardiac Arrest (T) (R)
12.0 Cardiac Arrest (T) (R) **12.30** Cardiac Arrest (T) (R) **1.0** Universe (T) (R) **2.0** Black Snow (T) (R) **2.55** Black Snow (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Love, Victor **8.30** Love, Victor **8.55** Ryan Tricks on the Streets **9.0** Scars: Surviving a Stabbing **10.0** BBC New Comedy Awards **10.30** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI **10.0** David Mitchell's Outsiders **11.0** Live at the Apollo **12.0** Live at the Apollo **1.0** Mock the Week **1.40** Big Zuu's Big Eats **2.20** Gavin & Stacey **3.0** Holier Than Thou **3.30** Beat the Internet With John Robins **4.0** Teleshopping

Kirkmoore **10.55** The Bold Type **11.35** Scars: Surviving a Stabbing **12.35** Wagspiracy: Vardy v Rooney **1.20** BBC New Comedy Awards **1.50** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **2.20** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **2.50** Scars: Surviving a Stabbing

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Expedition With Steve Backshall: Unpacked **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Inside the Factory: How Our Favourite Foods Are Made **11.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Top Gear **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Pointless **5.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **5.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **6.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20**

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.05** Sex Rated **11.10** Gogglebox **12.10** First Dates **1.15** Married at First Sight UK **2.20** Sex Rated **3.15** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **4.05** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.0** Black-ish **5.25** Black-ish

Film4
11.0am FILM The Holly and the Ivy (1952) **12.40** FILM Midnight Lace (1960) **2.50** FILM Dead Reckoning (1947) **4.55** FILM 3:10 to Yuma (1957) **6.45** FILM I, Robot (2004) **9.0** FILM Land (2021) **10.45** FILM 13 Going on 30 (2004) **12.35** FILM Songs My Brothers Taught Me (2015) **2.25** FILM Babymother (1998)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow: Celebrity Special **8.0** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Big Brother **10.0** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.05** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Bob's Burgers **1.55** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.35** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max
6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Strike Back: Retribution **9.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **9.45** The Lazarus Project **10.45** FILM Game of Death (1978) **12.35** The Force: North East **1.35** Road Wars **2.0** Brassic **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Cirque Du Soleil: Alegría **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Robert Donat **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** National Treasures: The Art of Collecting **3.0** Julie Andrews Forever **4.0** Discovering: Ronald Colman **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2023 **9.0** Discovering: John Mills **10.0** Discovering: Claude Rains **11.0** Daylight Rules **11.20** Mildred Pierce **12.50** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **2.10** Deep Purple: Live With the London SO **3.30** Discovering: Black Sabbath **4.0** Classic Movies: The Story of Terminator 2: Judgment Day **5.0** Steve Pemberton & Reece Shearsmith


Kirkmoore, BBC Three

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Knick **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** Das Boot **11.0** Drift: Partners in Crime **12.0** Das Boot **1.0** In Treatment **1.30** Dreamland **2.0** The Lovers **2.40** Game of Thrones **3.45** In Treatment **4.15** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Fauré (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Alina Ibragimova and Carole Cerasi play three of Bach's sonatas for violin and harpsichord at LSO St Luke's in London. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Laura van der Heijden plays Walton's Cello Concerto with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Plus, music by Wagner, Coleridge-Taylor and Janáček. **4.0** Choral Evensong. From the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Mark Elder and choral director Matthew Hamilton conduct the Hallé, the Hallé Choir and violinist Roberto Ruisi in Sibelius's The Oceanides, Stravinsky's Violin Concerto and Ravel's Daphnis and Chloé. **10.0** Free Thinking. Directors of the National Portrait Gallery in London and Macba in Barcelona talk to Anne McElvoy about running an art museum. **10.45** The Essay: The Lost Hours. Andrew Martin focuses on the concept of afternoon tea. (R) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **9.0** Life Changing. With Sian Williams. (1/7) **9.30** Just One Thing With Michael Mosley. Why nose breathing could benefit your gums and your lungs. (4/10) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Going Infinite. By Michael Lewis. (3/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The 93% Club (R) **11.30** Alexei Sayle's Strangers on a Train. From Hull to Liverpool. (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** An Almanac of Anxiety: In Search of a Calmer Mind. Helen Needham joins a group of socially prescribed outdoor swimmers. (R) **2.0** The Archers **2.15** Fault Lines: Blood. Deception, by Fiona Evans. (R) **3.0** Money Box Live **3.30** Inside Health (R) **4.0** Thinking Allowed (7/9) **4.30** The Media Show **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Daliso Chaponda: Citizen of Nowhere. Comedy. (1/4) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Moral Maze (4/8) **9.0** When It Hits the Fan (6/8) **9.30** The Media Show (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Open Throat. By Henry Hoke. (3/5) **11.0** Njambi McGrath: Black Black. The Kenya-born comedian's dark take on colonialism's long scar. (1/4) **11.15** The Skewer (1/8) **11.30** Lusus (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week: Going Infinite (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day: Dotterel (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Ordeal By Innocence (1/3) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (4/6) **7.0** The Camomile Lawn (3/10) **7.15** Ground Control (3/5) **7.30** Relativity (4/6) **8.0** Hancock's Half Hour (6/20) **8.30** King of Bath (4/6) **9.0** It's Not What You Know (4/4) **9.30** The Right Time (1/6) **10.0** Piaf and Cocteau **10.45** The Other Girl **11.0** Ordeal By Innocence (1/3) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (4/6) **12.0** The Camomile Lawn (3/10) **12.15** Ground Control (3/5) **12.30** Relativity (4/6) **1.0** Hancock's Half Hour (6/20) **1.30** King of Bath (4/6) **2.0** It's Not What You Know (4/4) **2.30** The Right Time (1/6) **3.0** Piaf and Cocteau **3.45** The Other Girl **4.0** Ordeal By Innocence (1/3) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (4/6) **5.0** The Camomile Lawn (3/10) **5.15** Ground Control (3/5) **5.30** Relativity (4/6) **6.0** Hancock's Half Hour (6/20) **6.30** King of Bath (4/6) **7.0** It's Not What You Know (4/4) **7.30** The Right Time (1/6) **8.0** Spoken Like a Woman **9.0** Short Cuts (2/6) **9.30** Journey Into Space: The Red Planet (3/20) **10.0** Comedy Club: Please Use Other Door (4/4) **10.30** Agendum (R) **11.0** Kevin Eldon Will See You Now (2/4) **11.30** Joseph Morpurgo's Walking Tour (4/4) **11.45** Lenny Henry: Rogue's Gallery (4/4) **12.0** Piaf and Cocteau **12.45** The Other Girl **1.0** Ordeal By Innocence (1/3) **1.30** High Table, Lower Orders (4/6) **2.0** The Camomile Lawn (3/10) **2.15** Ground Control (3/5) **2.30** Relativity (4/6) **3.0** Hancock's Half Hour (6/20) **3.30** King of Bath (4/6) **4.0** It's Not What You Know (4/4) **4.30** The Right Time (1/6) **5.0** A Man Alone (1/3)

Thursday



Pride of Britain Awards 2023, ITV1

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Caught Red Handed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** The Repair Shop (T) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon** (T) (R) Stacey and her team help the Harris-Hawley family declutter their lives.

9.0 **Soldier** (T) As the training ramps up, the remaining infantry recruits are pushed to breaking point as they face tough discipline and exhausting physical tests.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Question Time** (T) Fiona Bruce chairs the topical debate in London.
11.40 **Newscast** (T) BBC journalists including Adam Fleming and Chris Mason host a weekly round-up from Westminster.
12.10 **Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.15** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Money for Nothing** (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under (T) (R) **3.0** Murder, Mystery and My Family (T) (R) **3.45** This Wild Life (T) (R) **4.15** Cornwall: This Fishing Life (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T) **7.0** The Warship: Tour of Duty (T) (R)

8.0 **Saving Lives at Sea** (T) Father-son duo Frank and Jack race to the rescue of a kayaker who has failed to make it back to shore.

9.0 **Interview With the Vampire** (T) New series. Gothic horror based on Anne Rice's The Vampire Chronicles, starring Jacob Anderson, Sam Reid and Eric Bogosian.

10.05 **No Activity** (T) (R) Stokes and Hendy are joined in the car by Carol's son Lachy.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.15 **Union With David Olusoga** (T) (R) The history of the UK.
12.15 **Sign Zone** Amazing Hotels (T) (R) **1.15** Strictly Come Dancing (T) (R) **3.30** Strictly Come Dancing: The Results (T) **4.10** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Pride of Britain Awards 2023** (T) Carol Vorderman and Ashley Banjo host the annual award ceremony which honours and celebrates the nation's unsung heroes. Famous guests include Ant and Dec, David Beckham, Alison Hammond, Michael Sheen, Aitch and Holly Willoughby.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **The Real Crown: Inside the House of Windsor** (T) (R)
11.40 **All Elite Wrestling** (T)
12.35 **The Chase** (T) (R) **1.25** Tipping Point (T) (R) **2.15** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.05** Grand Slam Years: Wales 2019 (T) (R) **3.55** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.10** Tenable (T)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Great British Bake Off: An Extra Slice** (T) Jo Brand is joined by Paul Hollywood.

9.0 **Taskmaster** (T) Lucy Beaumont gets her flowers mixed up, Sam Campbell regrets a trip abroad, Julian Clary orders some edible pants and Susan Wokoma shakes her head at Sue Perkins sniffing a door.

10.0 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown** (T) (R)
11.05 **European Qualifiers Preview**
11.40 **Naked, Alone and Racing to Get Home** (T) (R)
12.35 **Naked Attraction** (T) (R) **1.30** Celebrity SAS (T) (R) **2.20** Don't Look Down (T) (R) **3.15** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) **4.0** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **4.50** Tool Club (T)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Gabbi Luck Mystery: Old Flame, New Murder (David DeCoteau, 2023) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Dirty Home Rescue (T) (R)

8.0 **The Dog Hospital With Graeme Hall** (T) Two-year-old labrador Willow is rushed to the hospital because a severe infection has taken hold in her chest.

9.0 **All Creatures Great and Small** (T) Siegfried hires an experienced bookkeeper, but her efficient approach doesn't suit everyone.

10.0 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) Highlights of Australia v South Africa.
11.05 **Skin A&E** (T) (R)
12.05 **Police Interceptors** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Secrets of Pompeii's Greatest Treasures (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.05** House Busters (T) (R) **5.35** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **The Sky at Night: Question Time Special** (T) (R) A question-and-answer edition from Exeter.

8.0 FILM **Henry V** (Kenneth Branagh, 1989) (T) The English king leads his armies into battle to reclaim control of France. Adaptation of Shakespeare's play, starring Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi, Brian Blessed, Emma Thompson, Ian Holm, Robert Stephens and Christian Bale.

10.10 FILM **Don't Look Now** (Nicolas Roeg, 1973) (T) Supernatural thriller, starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie.
12.0 **Scene By Scene: Donald Sutherland** (T) (R) **12.40** Arena: Shakespeare on Film (T) (R) **1.40** Imagine: Malorie Blackman – What If? (T) (R) **2.50** The Nation's Railway (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Love, Victor **8.30** Love, Victor **9.0** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **10.10** The After Shave With Danny Beard **10.25** Back to Life **10.50** Back to Life **11.15** The Bold Type **11.55** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **1.05** Back to Life **1.25** Back to Life **1.50** Scars: Surviving a Stabbing **2.50** RuPaul's Drag Race UK

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Expedition With Steve Backshall: Unpacked **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Inside the Factory: Cereal **11.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **11.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Top Gear **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Pointless **5.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **5.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **6.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **6.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **10.40** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **11.20** Gavin & Stacey **12.0** Gavin & Stacey **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** British As Folk **2.45** The Other Half **3.30** Beat the Internet With John Robins **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.05** In Love and Toxic: Blue Therapy **11.05** Gogglebox **12.10** First Dates **1.20** Rick and Morty **1.50** Robot Chicken **2.05** Robot Chicken **2.20** Married at First Sight UK **3.15** In Love and Toxic: Blue Therapy **4.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.25** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.50** Black-ish **5.15** Black-ish

Film4

11.0am FILM Timberjack (1954) **12.55** FILM Dark Command (1940) **2.50** FILM The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell (1955) **5.05** FILM Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956) **6.50** FILM Pacific Rim: Uprising (2018) **9.0** FILM London Has Fallen (2016) **10.55** FILM Hitman (2007) **12.45** FILM A Fantastic Woman (2017)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Catchphrase Celebrity Special **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow: Celebrity Special **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Big Brother **10.0** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.30** American Dad! **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Bob's Burgers **1.55** The Sex Lives of College Girls **2.25** The Sex Lives of College Girls **2.55** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** CITV

Sky Max

6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** Air Ambulance ER **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** Road Wars **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** An Idiot Abroad 2 **9.0** Cobra: Rebellion **10.0** Brassic **11.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **11.45** The Blacklist **12.45** Warrior **2.0** Fantasy Island **4.0** Hawaii Five-0 **5.0** S.W.A.T

Sky Arts

6.0am Charles Hazlewood: Beethoven & Me **7.0** Musical Masterpieces **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Ronald Colman **12.0** The Joy of Painting **12.30** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Van Gogh & Japan **3.0** Brunelleschi's Impossible Dome **4.0** Discovering: Harvey Keitel **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2023 **8.0** Classic Literature & Cinema **9.0** Mildred Pierce **10.40** Murmur **11.0** The Seventies **12.0** The Directors **1.0** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **2.15** Back to Basquiat **3.30** Marina Abramović Takes Over TV **4.30** Inside Art: Lubaina Himid at Tate Modern **5.0** The South Bank Show



A Fantastic Woman, Film4

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Urban Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Knick **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Lovers **9.40** Dreamland **10.10** Billions **1.25** Game of Thrones **3.35** In Treatment **4.05** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **5.0** Billions

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Fauré (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. The third concert of Bach chamber music at LSO St Luke's in London, featuring three pieces performed by Maxim Rysanov, Alexander Sitkovetsky and Steven Devine. (R) **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Alpesh Chauhan conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. Plus, music by Wagner, Coleridge-Taylor, Mussorgsky and Howells. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Live from City Halls, Glasgow, Ryan Wigglesworth conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and saxophonist Martin Robertson in Beethoven's Leonore Overture No 2, Turnage's Your Rockaby, Unsuk Chin's Subito con forza and Stravinsky's Orpheus. **10.0** Free Thinking. Matthew Sweet discusses blondness with art historian Lynda Nead. **10.45** The Essay: The Lost Hours. Andrew Martin muses on the lost hours of the afternoon. (R) **11.0** The Night Tracks Mix **11.30** Unclassified **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** In Our Time. Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the essays written by authors of the US Constitution. **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Going Infinite. By Michael Lewis. (4/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** From Our Own Correspondent (3/8) **11.30** A Good Read (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** You and Yours **12.25** Sliced Bread (3/12) **1.0** The World at One **1.45** An Almanac of Anxiety: In Search of a Calmer Mind (R) **2.0** The Archers **2.15** The Adventurers: Scenes from the East India Company. Drama, by Fin Kennedy. **3.0** Ramblings. Clare Balding joins natural history TV producer Mike Gunton on a route route around Oldbury on Severn. (4/6) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Ashden (R) **3.30** Open Book (R) **4.0** Any Questions On Alex Forsyth examines how the role of the state in supporting society has evolved. (1/3) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.30** Kevin Eldon Will See You Now (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Briefing Room (17/18) **8.30** The Bottom Line (3/8) **9.0** Inside Science (R) **9.30** In Our Time **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime (4/5) **11.0** The Today Podcast **11.30** Lusus. Khar Darakh, by Samantha Newton. (7/8) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Ordeal By Innocence (2/3) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **7.0** The Camomile Lawn (4/10) **7.15** Ground Control (4/5) **7.30** What Does the K Stand for? (3/6) **8.0** Dad's Army (19/20) **8.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle's Compleat Life and Works of William Shakespeare (6/6) **9.0** Jest a Minute (4/6) **9.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (4/4) **10.0** A Man Alone (1/3) **11.0** Ordeal By Innocence (2/3) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **12.0** The Camomile Lawn (4/10) **12.15** Ground Control (4/5) **12.30** What Does the K Stand For? (3/6) **1.0** Dad's Army (19/20) **1.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (6/6) **2.0** Jest a Minute (4/6) **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (4/4) **3.0** A Man Alone (1/3) **4.0** Ordeal By Innocence (2/3) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **5.0** The Camomile Lawn (4/10) **5.15** Ground Control (4/5) **5.30** What Does the K Stand For? (3/6) **6.0** Dad's Army (19/20) **6.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (6/6) **7.0** Jest a Minute (4/6) **7.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (4/4) **8.0** The Real Comedy Controllers: The Things That Made Us Laugh **9.0** Great Lives (2/9) **9.30** Journey Into Space: The Red Planet (4/20) **10.0** My Teenage Diary (6/6) **10.30** Alex Edelman's Peer Group (1/4) **11.0** Hamish and Dougal: You'll Have Had Your Tea (6/6) **11.15** Life With Lederer (3/5) **11.30** Ectoplasm (2/4) **12.0** A Man Alone (1/3) **1.0** Ordeal By Innocence (2/3) **1.30** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **2.0** The Camomile Lawn (4/10) **2.15** Ground Control (4/5) **2.30** What Does the K Stand For? (3/6) **3.0** Dad's Army (19/20) **3.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (6/6) **4.0** Jest a Minute (4/6) **4.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (4/4) **5.0** A Man Alone (2/3)

Friday



Uncanny, BBC Two

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Caught Red Handed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Five Bedrooms (T) **2.30** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** The Repair Shop (T) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** Make It at Market (T)

8.0 **Would I Lie to You?** (T) (R) With Raj Bisram, Deborah Frances-White, Stephen Mulhern and Jenny Ryan.
8.30 **Ghosts** (T) Alison and Mike plan to sell some land.
9.0 **Have I Got News for You** (T) Alexander Armstrong hosts.
9.30 **Mrs Brown's Boys** (T) (R) Cathy refuses to introduce her boyfriend.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **The Graham Norton Show** (T) Chatshow with guests Laura Linney, Dawn French and London Hughes. Sugababes provide the music.
11.30 **RuPaul's Drag Race UK** (T) (R) The queens take on a 90s rave banger.
12.40 **Weather** (T) **12.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics UK (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Make Me a Dealer (T) (R) **2.30** Wanted Down Under (T) (R) **3.0** Murder, Mystery and My Family (T) (R) **3.45** This Wild Life (T) (R) **4.15** Cornwall: This Fishing Life (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T) **7.0** Your Garden Made Perfect (T) (R)

8.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) Frances Tophill assesses the tomatoes in her upcycled greenhouse, before heading to a specialist nursery to buy plants for her pond.
9.0 **Uncanny** (T) New series. Adaptation of the Radio 4 series with Danny Robins, featuring real-life accounts of supernatural encounters.

10.0 **Red Dwarf** (T) (R) The crew answer a distress call.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 FILM **Woman in Gold** (Simon Curtis, 2015) (T) Fact-based drama, starring Helen Mirren and Ryan Reynolds.
12.45 **DNA Family Secrets** (T) (R) **1.45** Sign Zone: Panorama (T) (R) **2.15** Saving Lives at Sea (T) **3.15** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) As the shocked residents realise that they have a murderer in their midst, the hunt is on to find Stephen before he can add to his death toll.
9.0 **Barbara Knox at 90** (T) The Coronation Street star who plays Rita celebrates her 90th birthday with Bradley Walsh.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Daily Mirror Pride of Britain Awards 2023** (T) (R) Carol Vorderman and Ashley Banjo host the ceremony.
12.30 **The NFL Show** (T) **1.25** All Elite Wrestling (T) (R) **3.05** In the Shadow of Mary Seacole (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Tenable (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** News (T)

7.0 **Live England International Football** (T) England v Australia (kick-off 7.45pm). All the action from the friendly at Wembley Stadium. Jules Breach presents, with analysis from Joe Cole, Jill Scott and Harry Kewell.

10.0 **Gogglebox** (T)
11.05 **Big Fat Quiz of the Decade** (T) (R) With Claudia Winkleman, Nish Kumar, Joe Lycett, Alan Carr, Stacey Solomon and Jonathan Ross.
12.55 **England International Football** (T) **1.50** FILM Rocks (2019) (T) Drama. **3.25** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.40** Beat the Chef (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Finding Emma (Jeff Hare, 2021) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Shop Smart, Save Money (T)

8.0 **Susan Calman's Grand Day Out** (T) The comedian explores HMS Victory in Portsmouth.
9.0 **The Good Ship Murder** (T) New series. A detective turned cruise ship singer helps investigate the murder of a passenger. Crime drama, starring Shayne Ward and Catherine Tyldesley.

10.0 **World's Most Expensive Cruise** (T)
11.05 **Inside HMP Frankland** (T) (R)
12.35 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) New Zealand v Bangladesh highlights. **1.35** Live Casino Show (T) **3.40** Friends (T) (R) **4.30** The Railways That Built Britain (T) (R) **5.15** House Busters (T) (R) **5.45** Milkshake! (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1995, with Duran Duran, Wet Wet Wet and East 17. **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) An edition from 1995, with Strike, Menswear and Hole.

8.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1987, with UB40, Five Star, the Alarm and Bananarama.
8.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1984, with Kim Wilde, Sade, Wham! and Alison Moyet.
9.0 **Jazz Divas Gold** (T) (R) A selection of performances by female artists, including Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Nina Simone and Cleo Laine.

10.0 **Joan Armatrading: Me Myself I** (T) (R) The singer tells her life story, both as a songwriter and performer.
11.0 **Joan Armatrading in Concert** (T) (R) Alan Black introduces a performance at the Hammersmith Odeon.
12.0 **Joan Armatrading at Asylum Chapel** (T) (R) **1.55** Top of the Pops (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Love, Victor **8.30** Love, Victor **9.0** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **9.30** FILM Get Out (2017) **11.10** FILM Candyman (2021) **12.35** The Bold Type **1.20** BBC New Comedy Awards **1.50** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **2.15** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.45** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **3.15** Hire Me: Competing for a Dream Job **3.45** Press X to Continue

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Expedition With Steve Backshall: Unpacked **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Inside the Factory: Crisps **11.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **11.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Top Gear **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Pointless **5.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **5.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **6.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **6.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** QI XL **9.20** Would I Lie to You? **10.0** QI XL **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** British As Folk **2.45** Sliced **3.30** Beat the Internet With John Robins **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** Celebrity Gogglebox 2022 **10.0** FILM Venom (2018) **12.15** Naked Attraction **1.20** Naked Attraction **2.25** Gogglebox **3.20** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **4.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.05** Black-ish

Film4

11.0am FILM The Black Shield of Falworth (1954) **1.05** FILM Santa Fe Passage (1955) **2.55** FILM The Cockleshell Heroes (1955) **5.05** FILM The Land That Time Forgot (1975) **6.55** FILM The Nanny Diaries (2007) **9.0** FILM Anna (2019) **11.20** FILM The Girl in the Spider's Web (2018) **1.35** FILM Heatwave (2022)

ITV2

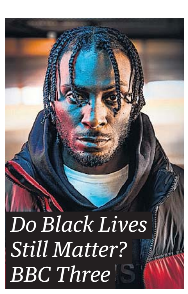
6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Big Brother: Live Eviction **10.0** Big Brother: Late & Live **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Bob's Burgers **2.0** Iain Stirling's CelebAbility **2.40** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** Dodo **5.15** Dodo **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max

6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** Air Ambulance ER **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** Road Wars **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **78.0** Strike Back: Silent War **9.0** The Lazarus Project **10.0** Warrior **11.0** FILM Game of Death II (1980) **1.0** The Blacklist **2.0** Stop, Search, Seize **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am HMS Pinafore With ENO **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Harvey Keitel **12.0** The Joy of Painting **12.30** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.35** FILM Pursuit to Algiers (1945) **3.0** Robert Burns: No Holds Bard **4.0** Discovering: Sally Field **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Discovering: Roy Scheider **9.0** Queen: Hungarian Rhapsody – Live in Budapest **11.0** Bee Gees: In Our Own Time **12.15** Pink Floyd: The Story of Wish You Were Here **1.30** The Who: Live at Kilburn 1977 **2.55** Greatest Albums Live **3.55** Live from the Artists Den **5.05** The South Bank Show



Do Black Lives Still Matter? BBC Three

Sky Atlantic

6.10am Urban Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Knick **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** **Billions** **10.10** Das Boot **12.10** Chernobyl **1.20** Angels in America **2.50** Game of Thrones **4.0** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Fauré (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. From LSO St Luke's, London, harpsichordist Justin Taylor and the Consone Quartet perform two concertos by JS Bach and a solo Toccata. (R) **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Simone Menezes conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Mendelssohn's Symphony No 3, "Scottish". Plus, music by Wagner, Coleridge-Taylor and Brahms. **4.30** The Listening Service (R) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Kazuki Yamada conducts the CBSO and Chorus in the opening night of a season celebrating the 50th anniversary of the CBSO Chorus. With Evelina Dobračeva (soprano), Karen Cargill (mezzo), Jose Simerilla Romero (tenor) and Ashley Riches (bass). **10.0** The Verb **10.45** The Essay: The Lost Hours. Andrew Martin muses on the cocktail hour. (R) **11.0** Late Junction **1.0** Ultimate Calm (R) **2.0** Happy Harmonies With Laufey (R) **3.0** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Desert Island Discs (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Going Infinite. By Michael Lewis. (5/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Briefing Room (R) **11.30** Tom Allen Is Actually Not Very Nice (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Archive on 4: The Cult of Lebowski **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** An Almanac of Anxiety: In Search of a Calmer Mind. The benefits of gardening for people with mental illness. (R) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** The System. Thriller, by Ben Lewis. (5/5) **2.45** Close Encounters. Sir Tim Berners-Lee on Christabel Pankhurst. (R) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** Short Works. Something Borrowed, by Karen Campbell. **4.0** Last Word **4.30** Feedback (1/11) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The News Quiz (6/8) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Add to Playlist. Isata Kanneh-Mason and Neil Brand launch a new playlist. (1/9) **8.0** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.0** Archive on 4: Kissinger's Century. The US statesman Henry Kissinger reflects on his life and experiences. **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Open Throat. By Henry Hoke. (5/5) **11.0** Americast **11.30** Lusus. Ale of Goibhniu, by Samantha Newton. (8/8) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week: Going Infinite (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Close Encounters (R)

Radio 4 Extra

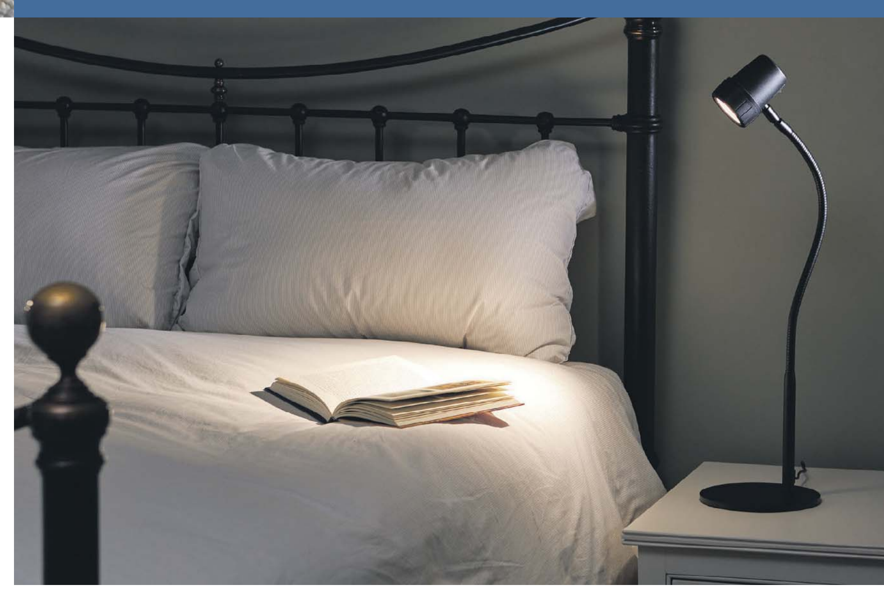
6.0am Ordeal By Innocence (3/3) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (6/6) **7.0** The Camomile Lawn (5/10) **7.15** Ground Control (5/5) **7.30** Ed Reardon's Week (1/6) **8.0** Marriage Lines (11/13) **8.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (2/6) **9.0** Whispers (6/6) **9.30** Barbara Nice (3/4) **10.0** A Man Alone (2/3) **11.0** Ordeal By Innocence (3/3) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (6/6) **12.0** The Camomile Lawn (5/10) **12.15** Ground Control (5/5) **12.30** Ed Reardon's Week (1/6) **1.0** Marriage Lines (11/13) **1.30** Kathmandu Or Bust* (2/6) **2.0** Whispers (6/6) **2.30** Barbara Nice (3/4) **3.0** A Man Alone (2/3) **4.0** Ordeal By Innocence (3/3) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (6/6) **5.0** The Camomile Lawn (5/10) **5.15** Ground Control (5/5) **5.30** Ed Reardon's Week (1/6) **6.0** Marriage Lines (11/13) **6.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (2/6) **7.0** Whispers (6/6) **7.30** Barbara Nice (3/4) **8.0** Three-Sided Football **8.30** Soul Music (4/5) **9.0** Monsters of Music With Tom Allen **9.30** Journey Into Space: The Red Planet (5/20) **10.0** Comedy Club: Desolation Jests (1/4) **10.30** 4 Stands Up (2/6) **11.0** Nick Mohammed in Quarters (1/4) **11.15** Bunk Bed (1/8) **11.30** The Mark Steel Lecture (3/4) **12.0** The Bee Maker **12.45** The Man and the Snake By Ambrose Bierce **1.0** A Man Alone (2/3) **2.0** Ordeal By Innocence (3/3) **2.30** High Table, Lower Orders (6/6) **3.0** The Camomile Lawn (5/10) **3.15** Ground Control (5/5) **3.30** Ed Reardon's Week (1/6) **4.0** Marriage Lines (11/13) **4.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (2/6) **5.0** Whispers (6/6) **5.30** Barbara Nice (3/4)

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As Laurence Fox fights Ulez for us, who fights for him? *Marina Hyde, page 3*

Northern voters will not forget Rishi Sunak's HS2 betrayal *Sarah Lester, page 4*

Labour now needs to learn from its past mistakes in Scotland *James Mitchell, page 4*

The Guardian Saturday 7 October 2023

Journal

Opinion and ideas



ILLUSTRATION: RAJ DHUNNA

Now they can shoot, but the killing goes on all year long

George Monbiot



It's one of the bluntest expressions of class power in the United Kingdom. Like all expressions of class power, it has become so normalised that we treat it as a fixed fact of national life. I'm talking about the bronze plague that spreads over the British lowlands every year, wiping out much of our wildlife: pheasants.

This week, pheasant shooting began, appropriately coinciding with the Conservative party conference. The killing requires no physical exertion and a limited skillset, as the birds are driven over the heads of the shooters by people hired to flush them out of the woods. The men (almost all are) with the guns spray shot at the low-flying birds, killing some, wounding some, missing others. One estimate suggests between 30% and 40% of the pheasants shot are wounded and not recovered, left to die slowly in the woods.

As always with politically protected activities, there's a dearth of reliable data. The government agency Natural England estimates that between 39m and 57m pheasants and 8m to 13m red-legged partridges are released in the UK every year. In August there is as great a weight of these non-native birds at large in Britain as of all wild birds put together.

Pheasants and red-legged partridges hoover up everything from flower seeds, fungi and insects to lizards and baby snakes, frogs and baby birds, radically altering the ecology of the countryside.

An extraordinary pre-slaughter takes place year-round, to prepare for the great massacre that begins on 1 October. Foxes are snared or shot in their tens of thousands, members of the crow family are relentlessly persecuted, weasels and stoats (among our most fascinating and least-appreciated mammals) are trapped and killed in unknown numbers - and these are just the legal assaults on nature. Just as grouse moors are black holes for hen harriers and golden eagles, pheasant woods are often black holes for goshawks and other raptors, polecats and pine martens that would otherwise live there. Pure coincidence, no doubt. It always is.

While there are closed seasons for the shooting of pheasants and partridges, there are no closed seasons for the killing of foxes, crows and other species that might eat them. When the adults are killed, the babies starve to death.

Despite this, the numbers of some wild animals, such as carrion crows, rats and foxes, are boosted overall by the killing

Now they can shoot, but the killing goes on all year long

George Monbiot

← Continued from front

industry, as they eat the grain provided for the bronze plague or the dead birds splattered over the roads soon after their release. Gamekeepers seek to reverse the population explosions they cause through endless killing. Some species also benefit from the habitats created by shooting businesses for their pheasants. But the aggregate effect is to create grossly unbalanced ecologies, with consequences that ramify along the food chain. The scale of pheasant releases has risen tenfold over the past 60 years.

After each massacre, most of the dead pheasants, as there's little demand for their meat, are dumped in "stink pits", which also receive the corpses of the many species classified as vermin ("game" means animals you pay to kill, "vermin" are animals you pay other people to kill).

The great majority of bird-blasters still use lead shot. One scientific estimate suggests that between 2,500 and 6,700 tonnes of the toxic metal is fired at gamebirds in the UK every year. Long after it was banned in coarse angling (a mostly working-class pursuit), lead shot in gun cartridges remains legal in the UK, despite the vast catalogue of harms documented by the government's Lead Ammunition Group. After procrastinating for years, the government says there'll be a bill this autumn. Believe it when you see it.

In the midst of a bird flu epidemic that now threatens the survival of some native species and presents a constant risk of mutating to become a human pandemic, the annual release of pheasants and partridges could easily become a super-spreader event. But the government sits and waits for disaster.

Pheasants are heavily dosed with antibiotics, often mixed with the feed in their release pens, which is also eaten by wild species – as are many of the pheasants. It's a perfect strategy for encouraging antibiotic-resistant bacteria. No consideration for human health, animal welfare or ecological integrity seems to stand in this industry's way.

In 2014, I wrote about the extraordinary legal contortions required to justify every stage of pheasant rearing, shooting and recapture. Pheasants are clearly livestock, domestic animals whose husbandry and habits are very similar to those of chickens (they're members of the same family). But the law bends and twists to enable these livestock to be blown out of the air. My findings were turned into a brilliant graphic by the campaign group Wild Justice, called Schrödinger's Pheasant. While the campaign has forced the Westminster government to make some small legal concessions, the impacts of this monstrous industry remain largely unchanged.

Of course pheasant shooting can't be challenged – it's woven into the soul of the nation! In fact, it took off only when Prince Albert popularised it in the 1840s. The mass slaughter of birds, accelerated by the development of breech-loading shotguns in the 1850s, coincided with the mass slaughter of humans in the Afghan, Opium, Anglo-Sikh, Xhosa and Anglo-Burmese wars and the Indian rebellion, in which the British laid waste to other civilisations with the help of new weaponry.

The mindset was much the same. As you can see from the celebration of death in all its forms on the walls of stately homes, elite culture is killing culture. After all, what greater expression of power can there be than to decree and enact mass death? I suspect that the industrial killing of other animals has long helped inure the ruling classes to the industrial killing of human beings.

The class politics at play are beautifully explored in English author Barry Hines's gently powerful novel The Gamekeeper. Joining a shoot is a ticket to social acceptance in the upper echelons, and the signal to everyone else that you've made it.

Made what, exactly? This necroculture is part of the unmaking of both our ecosystems and our humanity. If it were the favoured sport of any other class, it would have been banned long ago.

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'Comment is free… but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Labour

Keir Starmer must swap defensive caution for a bolder offer to voters

Labour's comfortable victory in this week's Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection, beating the Scottish National party on a swing of more than 20%, gives reasonable cause to expect that Sir Keir Starmer will next year replace Rishi Sunak in Downing Street. Labour has never controlled the Commons without a significant haul of Scottish seats.

The prospect of recovering terrain lost to the SNP in recent years makes winning a Westminster majority look less daunting. But the road is still steep after the crushing defeat of 2019, which is why Labour cannot afford to be complacent. Byelections don't lend themselves to simple extrapolation of national trends. In Scotland as in England, polling trends express more irritation with an exhausted and discredited incumbent government than enthusiasm for the opposition. The Labour leader deserves credit for capitalising on the Tories' unpopularity and not falling into the traps his opponent has laid.

But this process has prioritised reassurance over inspiration, caution over radicalism. That has meant vagueness about what the Labour leader's priorities would be in government – an uncertainty exacerbated by the rate at which commitments he made to win a ballot of party members have been jettisoned as he increasingly looks to court swing voters in target seats.

A pattern of U-turns has encouraged Conservatives to attack Sir Keir as a typical politician who will say anything to get elected. The charge is hypocritical and unfair on a man who came to politics with a solid record of principled public service. That doesn't mean the barbs aren't wounding.

Sir Keir needs to use this week's conference in Liverpool to pivot from defensive avoidance of controversy to confident assertion of values, ideas and policy. The Tory conference last week made that task easier. Rishi Sunak said nothing meaningful about the NHS, or any other public services. He ignored the cost of living crisis. He has no housing plan. He has surrendered moral leadership on the climate emergency.

But Labour has struggled to narrate an alternative path that doesn't involve spending more money than is provided by implausibly austere Tory budgets. This position cannot hold for long. At some stage the opposition will have to spell out the real choice ahead: public investment to get Britain functioning again or continuing decay and decline. This is not a particularly militant position. Key Blairites told the Guardian that Labour should not shy away from promising bold economic policies.

The Green New Deal plan that Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, trumpeted at last year's conference is a powerful idea, subsequently diluted. The party should be less squeamish about an economic strategy that indicates genuine and necessary repudiation of Mr Sunak's tired and reheated Thatcherite prospectus.

With election victory in sight, it would be a mistake for Labour to double down on caution. Voters are now starting to pay attention to the opposition as a government in waiting. Sir Keir has the opportunity to change the terms of debate, and not simply operate within hostile parameters dictated by the Tories. Changing those terms is essential if he is to win a mandate for policies that will make a difference. His job in Liverpool is to describe a vision for Britain that gives people reason to vote for Labour because they have hope – rather than fear – for the future.

Migration

Outsourcing Europe's border controls is cruel and a dereliction of duty

At last month's Venice film festival, a fictional portrayal of African migrants seeking to reach Europe received widespread acclaim. Me, Captain charts the journey of two Senegalese teenagers as they navigate violence, extortion, detention and forced labour at the hands of corrupt police and traffickers in north Africa. It won a Silver Lion and standing ovations.

The movie is at times a heartbreaking watch. But Guardian reporting from Tunisia suggests that the reality is – if anything – grimmer, and that Europe is deeply complicit in the horror that is unfolding. In July, the European Union signed an agreement promising a substantial cheque to Tunisia's authoritarian leader, Kais Saied, in exchange for a crackdown on irregular migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean to Italy. According to testimony from migrants and NGOs on the ground, the result has been the brutal pushback, abuse and intimidation of sub-Saharan African migrants.

Our reporter was told that more than 4,000 people had been detained and then dumped in remote desert areas on Tunisia's borders with Libya and Algeria. Some were beaten and robbed of their money by border guards. Scores are believed to have died of thirst, as they attempted either to make their way back to the coast or elsewhere. The Guardian spoke to one Cameroonian asylum seeker who became separated from his wife and child. When a photo of a mother and daughter lying dead, face down in the desert, subsequently went viral, he recognised them immediately. Such a sight, according to other testimony, is not uncommon.

This intolerable cruelty towards acutely vulnerable people should not come as a surprise. In neighbouring Libya, where an EU-sponsored cooperation agreement was signed six years ago, detained migrants have been routinely subjected to rape, beatings, extortion and collective expulsion. Mr Saied – who assumed repressive, dictatorial powers in 2021 – has used incendiary rhetoric that has licensed racist hostility to black migrants, with outbreaks of violence the inevitable result.

Nevertheless, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, flanked by Giorgia Meloni, Italy's radical-right prime minister, and Mark Rutte, the Netherlands' outgoing leader, have seen fit to employ him as a kind of border guard. And at a European summit in Granada on Thursday, Rishi Sunak united with Ms Meloni in endorsing such deals. A partnership with Egypt may be next.

Craven complicity with human rights abuses, in the name of secure borders, is a betrayal of the values that Europe stands for. As Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, argued: "Democracy, human rights and cooperation must guide us in our cooperation – something that was not given suitable consideration, in the agreement with Tunisia."

This should never have needed to be said. But, as the Granada summit underlined, the challenge of 21st-century migration is in danger of unravelling the moral fabric of European politics. Insidiously, and incrementally, a fortress mentality has come to dominate the mainstream in a way that, even a few years ago, would have been inconceivable. Geopolitical instability and conflict, global inequality and the climate emergency mean that mass migration is a phenomenon of our age. That throws up great problems, dilemmas – and, for an ageing continent that needs to refresh its workforce, opportunities. But a "whatever it takes" approach that can countenance looking the other way, as desperate people die of thirst in the desert, is not a solution. It is a scandal.



Laurence Fox in Forest Hill, south London, last weekend, protesting against a drag queen storytelling event
PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA

As Laurence Fox fights Ulez for us, who fights for him?

Marina Hyde



> **Released on bail, Laurence brandished a copy of Solzhenitsyn's The Gulag Archipelago. Just incredible perspective**

Of all the buzz-phrases of 2023, the description of anti-Ulez-camera vandals as "blade runners" provokes the biggest eyeroll. Are you aware of this? People who chop down Ulez cameras because they disagree with the clean-air scheme have styled themselves "blade runners" - and a lot of the news media has simply gone along with it and started using it in coverage.

Sorry, but no. I'm looking at a picture of Harrison Ford in Blade Runner, and I'm looking at a picture of a bloke hanging off a lamp-post in a black balaclava and a straining Boohoo jacket, and I'm simply NOT going to demean the iconic Rick Deckard by asking: who wore it better? Having said all that, I did enjoy a recent interview with one of the camera vandals, in which he explained: "We are like a pack of lone wolves. We sometimes work together."

And so to recently bailed 45-year-old nepo baby Laurence Fox, who you may recall was in the news last week for holding some incredibly disparaging views about women, even though one bought him his house. Laurence defo looks like he had the Blade Runner director's-cut poster on his wall at Harrow. (Along with Pulp Fiction, a couple of the 90s supers - probably Claudia and Eva - and Bob Marley smoking a spliff, to leave the housemaster in no doubt he was the coolest guy in fifth form. Ethnic drapes: model's own.)

Reminder-wise, Laurence is the scion of the Fox acting dynasty whose CV long outperformed his talent, with his biggest role being Kevin Whately's sidekick, Sergeant Hathaway, in Lewis. Whately had, of course, previously played John Thaw's sidekick in Inspector Morse. But Hathaway never got his own standalone ITV Sunday night drama - not through lack of trying, I'm told - and Laurence moved on to fill a clearly yawning attention void by appearing on Question Time to accuse a mixed-race audience member of racism against him, or something.

He also posed in a Maga hat. And look: as recent years have shown, Trumpism *has* been a strong draw for those who find the jobs that were available to their fathers are no longer there for them. But we're normally talking about employment in Rust Belt steel production, or the auto industry, as opposed to prestige British drama. You can't all be in Remains of the Day for ever, luv. There *are* other jobs.

Anyway, Lozza's now the leader of a political party called Reclaim. He ran for London mayor, ironically failing to Reclaim his deposit. Presenting duties on GB News followed, as, inevitably, did his suspension for moronic remarks about a female journalist. This week found him on a conspiracist podcast stressing close ties to Ulez vandals, claiming, "I had a very, very wealthy guy the other day phone me up, and he said, 'I'll put 10 grand behind the counter of several Wickes's in London, and anyone who wants to … can go and get an angle-grinder for free.'" Forgive me, but I can't stop laughing at the idea of a gazillionaire holding a hanky over his phone and rasping: "I've put 10 grand behind the counter of Wickes …" Laurence went on to explain he'd be personally tearing down cameras, declaring, "I would be happy to be arrested myself."

Can I shock you? He was not happy. For lo, the next day Laurence's house was raided by five or six police - which will certainly make some Londoners wonder whether the best way to get the Met to make a house call when you've had a burglary is to be a twat on a podcast. While they were searching his house, Laurence did a live speech into his laptop camera - but devastatingly failed to make it a version of the famous tears-in-rain monologue out of Blade Runner. You know the one - "I've seen things you wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion … I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate …"

Just imagine Laurence's version: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Cars having to do 20mph on the Tower Bridge Road. Men who aren't allowed to see their kids - they know why - taking 19 goes with an angle-grinder to disable a camera in Chingford … All those moments will be lost, like tears in rain …" I mean, come on - HOW DID HE MISS? This, let's face it, was always the problem with Laurence as an actor. Simply didn't have the instinctive brilliance in the moment.

It was while he was in custody that the police told him he'd been let go by GBeebies. Again, great to see the Met going above and beyond - in this case performing the duties of a theatrical agent - but we do have to wonder if their time might now be better spent solving actual crimes. Released on bail, Laurence emerged brandishing a copy of Solzhenitsyn's The Gulag Archipelago. Just incredible perspective. I don't know how he follows that. Maybe quoting Hannah Arendt at a nightclub doorman who won't let him in.

Unfortunately, though Fox is the self-parody wing of the argument, it's worth remembering he sits on a continuum with senior Conservative politicians such as Iain Duncan Smith, who last month said he was "happy" with Ulez vandalism, before claiming to have been misrepresented. It's interesting watching some of the more frothing scourges of identity politics try to create the identity of "motorist", a marginalised group whose grievances we are all going to hear much, much more about in the run-up to the election. I'm sure a certain loser would say it's all the behaviour of winners - but as he sweats on a call-up for next month's I'm a Celeb, supposedly more serious politicians might do well to ask: is it really?

Voters in the north will not forget Sunak's HS2 betrayal

Sarah Lester



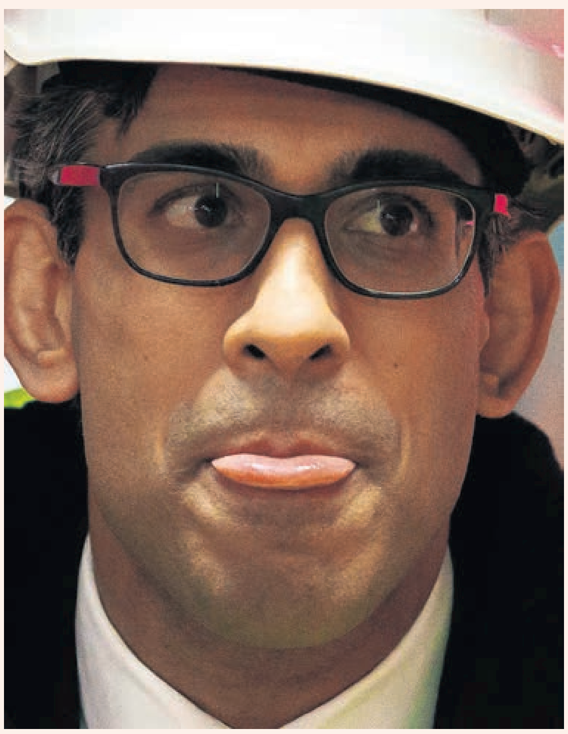
It was a generational chance to deal with the imbalances that have persisted since the 1980s. While London accelerated - powered by the City, a comprehensive transport system and the country's transition to a service economy - the deindustrialised great cities of the north, such as Manchester, fell behind.

Manchester's story, in the last 40 years, has been of a long and successful battle to reinvent itself. The city has always been a hive of innovation, culture and development, but for a period, post-industrial torpor overshadowed it. We've emerged from that and we're booming. But there is still lots of work to be done, and we can't do it without transport and infrastructure investment.

And yet, in an announcement made with grim irony in a former railway interchange in Manchester, Rishi Sunak smiled as he cancelled our leg of HS2.

It isn't as if the significance of the decision isn't understood by Sunak's party. In 2014 George Osborne, then the chancellor, made a speech at Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry. He described HS2 as a "vital investment", promising "it will change the economic geography of the country".

Five years later, the prime minister, Theresa May, reiterated the government's commitment, and then in 2020, Boris Johnson made a speech in the Commons in which he claimed the country faced a historic choice.



PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE LORRIMAN/AFP/GETTY

"We can try to get by with the existing route between north and south, condemning the next generation to overcrowding and standing up - or we can make the decision, no matter how difficult and controversial, that will deliver prosperity to every part of the country," he said. He wasn't wrong. Seven million people live in the north-west, yet the rail transport infrastructure is abysmal. You can't rely on a train between Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool because there's every possibility that it will be cancelled or delayed.

There was a promise to transform these connections through a new east-west high-speed route - "Northern Powerhouse" rail - announced by Osborne a decade ago and then scaled back. The National Audit Office has been critical of delays to an upgrade of the current route between Manchester and Leeds, announced in 2011, with £190m wasted. And, 10 years ago, extra platforms were promised at Manchester Piccadilly to alleviate crippling congestion. Plans were announced, then changed, before being axed this year. Meanwhile, the Elizabeth line in London has been built at a cost of £18bn. So, basically, we've been here before.

The reason why this matters is because lopsided transport policy leads to lopsided economic outcomes - which isn't good for the country and isn't even good for London. A wider spread of economic opportunities promises to improve quality of life everywhere, instead of a Hunger Games-type battle for housing and services in those parts of the country where they are unfairly concentrated.

In a letter to the Times, David Higgins, a former HS2 chairman, said: "The whole objective of this major investment has been forgotten … Imagine four cities - Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, London - 15 million people, three international airports all linked with a reliable service." It isn't just the failure to accept the economic case that leaves a bitter taste. It's the way decision-making is so centralised in a country where challenges vary from place to place.

Investment was already planned on the basis of HS2; land had already been acquired and the construction of the Manchester leg of the project was expected to provide 17,500 jobs in the north-west. A group of large businesses, including Kraft Heinz and Manchester United, wrote to the prime minister ahead of the announcement, suggesting it would be a "major act of self-sabotage" and would "damage our international standing as a place to do business".

Sunak has pledged that the money saved will be ploughed into transport projects across the north and Midlands (although it won't be available until the end of the decade). The £12bn announced for the Manchester to Liverpool upgrade is not new, and we have to hope it doesn't get taken away at some point. If the new Network North means that some elements of the previously scaled-back trans-Pennine plan will be revived then that is welcome, but this - and cash for potholes - is not enough to fundamentally rebalance the UK. There are unending demands on the public purse, but something has to change about the way our country is structured. A wealthier, more economically productive north, with Greater Manchester at its heart, will lead to a stronger country.

We need the government to see the north, not looking at us from London, but looking at the capital from "up here", where the view is very different.

HS2 has its share of detractors, and there are some who have never understood the point of spending so much money. Neither can we ignore the impact that the now-cancelled leg would have had on those in the region who feared for their homes, for the peace of their suburbs and villages, or the environment.

But many see the last week or so as another example of the north losing out in a way the capital never does. They see an injustice playing out. Some also see a country that is too reliant on Victorian infrastructure, in danger of falling behind through political blindness and an attachment to short-term gain.

Perhaps for Conservative voters in the shires, the prime minister's decision seems like a sensible diversion of public money. But in a significant part of the north - which includes a fair few "red wall" seats - it feels like a betrayal.

Will Labour now learn from past mistakes in Scotland?

James Mitchell



The "inevitability" of independence has been a key Scottish Nationalist party message in recent years. It was linked to the projection of its invincibility. But with its defeat in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West byelection, the march of the SNP has been halted. Its record in office, the serious issues of internal party management and the failure to address weaknesses in its independence prospectus have caught up with it. It is not inevitable that Scotland's governing party will lose a large number of seats next year, but it looks likely.

The SNP was once the insurgent party. It worked hard to convince voters that it would govern competently. It accused Labour of complacency and entitlement, but it has not taken long for these characteristics to become SNP hallmarks.

Much now turns on how the SNP reacts. It faces growing internal dissent. This byelection should force it to confront shocking allegations of mismanagement and dishonesty, the weaknesses in its independence prospectus and a series of policy failures and fiascos. But there is little sign of that happening.

The SNP meets in conference in just over a week, still assuming that independence is inevitable and all that needs to be decided is what constitutes a mandate to start independence negotiations. It is in danger of looking like a party talking to itself at a time when the cost of living is dominating public concerns.

Meanwhile, Scottish Labour has had to learn to compete for votes in places it had taken for granted in the past. It suited the SNP when the Tories became Scotland's second party in 2016. Those voters who moved from Labour to the SNP saw independence as the best way to get rid of the Tories. But that electoral buffer has been removed. Labour is a real threat to the SNP in a way the Scottish Tories never were.

But Labour cannot rely only on the SNP's current difficulties. There is still an absence of the excitement and enthusiasm that Labour generated before 1997. Even if Labour replaces the SNP as Scotland's largest party next year, it needs to look to the future. Scottish Labour's immediate challenge is to convince voters that it offers the best prospect for getting rid of the Tories next year. Its long-term objective is to convince voters it has a plan to ensure that Scotland will not feel shut out of UK decision-making, regardless of who is in power at Westminster.

The best way to prevent a future SNP insurgency would be to implement reforms of the UK state - such as replacing the Lords with a senate of regions and nations. The grievances that drive support for the SNP focus on perceptions that Scotland is ignored by Tory governments. Reforms that ensure the diverse nations and regions of the UK do not feel excluded from authoritative decision-making can restore faith and turn Scotland back to Labour in the long term.

*

Sarah Lester *is editor of the Manchester Evening News*

James Mitchell *is professor of public policy at Edinburgh University*



Why I will no longer fund Just Stop Oil

Dale Vince



I have supported and funded Just Stop Oil since its foundation. I've given it more than £340,000 because I agree with its simple demand: no drilling for new oil in the North Sea. The international political and scientific consensus is clear: to avoid the worst of the climate crisis, we cannot produce any new sources of fossil fuel.

I have defended Just Stop Oil's people and actions in countless media interviews. Protest is one of our fundamental democratic rights, and the more disruption, the more effective the protest. Just Stop Oil has taken this to a new level, but it has done so peacefully even when faced with aggression from members of the public and the state. And the disruption caused by Just Stop Oil is nothing compared with the disruption caused by the climate crisis, with the UN estimating that the global death toll is already more than 2 million people over the past 50 years.

So, I supported Just Stop Oil every way I could through this summer of very direct action, even joining campaigners on a march. I laud their conviction and bravery; it's not easy to slow-march along the road in front of traffic, with all your senses screaming at you to break rank and head for safety.

Our government is not only unmoved by these protests; it believes it has struck electoral gold. It has made clear that no amount of protest will sway it, and has doubled down in a desperate attempt to get itself a toehold in the next election.

Witness the hundreds of new drilling licences, the five-year delay on banning new petrol and diesel cars, and the backtracking on energy efficiency targets for tenants – not to mention the bogus announcements on meat taxes, car-sharing and "seven recycling bins".

This government has declared war on net zero and "green wokery" in a way that is not just dishonest, but dangerous.

For one thing, it falsely claims that these policies will save the public money in the face of hard evidence to the contrary. I have innovated and created green business in three big industries in need of change: energy, transport and food. In all three the business case is clear: the best policy for the environment is also the best policy for the economy. The green economy is how we solve our cost of living crisis, create sustainable and well-paid jobs, sustain economic growth and tackle the climate crisis.

The next general election is the most important of our lifetimes. And what the Tories will do if they get another stretch in power is crystal-clear: abandon net zero, open new coalmines and oilfields, and continue presiding over spiralling living costs.

And so yesterday I announced a change of direction: I am no longer going to fund Just Stop Oil.

Under the current government, protest cannot work. I would go so far as to say that anything that could feed the Tories' culture-war narrative is counterproductive.

In order to "just stop oil", first we need to just stop the Tories; to me that is simple, inarguable logic. So I'm going to dedicate my time, energy and funding to the coming election through a new campaign announced yesterday: Just Vote.

Our aim is twofold: first, to help younger voters navigate the obstacles placed in their path and encourage them to vote. Nobody has more skin in this game than young people today: the climate crisis will define their lifetimes.

Second, Just Vote aims to reach across generational and political divides to share a simple perspective: the next election is the most important ever, only one of two parties can realistically form a government, and its stance on green issues is the most important criterion. This stance will influence every other policy area.

The dividing lines have been drawn: Labour is green, the Tories are not. A vote for anyone other than Labour, or no vote at all, is a vote for another Tory government – this time with a mandate to pursue its anti-green crusade. Preventing that from happening is the only way to "just stop oil".

✱
Dale Vince *is a green energy industrialist and campaigner*



Just Stop Oil protesters in London last Saturday

Unpopularity contest at Conservative conference

Shelley's broader intention in his magnificent poem The Masque of Anarchy, written in response to the Peterloo massacre, is not always clear. At times he seems to be calling for violent revolution; at others, the message sounds more like peaceful protest against the triumvirate of oppression: "God, and King, and Law".

What he definitely did not mean was the kind of vicious xenophobia and casual disregard for basic human rights espoused by Suella Braverman in her conference speech on Tuesday ('Hurricane' of mass migration coming to UK, says home secretary, 4 October).

Shelley's appeal to the "Men of England" to "Rise like lions after slumber / In unvanquishable number" has been quoted by socially progressive speakers and movements from the Chartists onwards. To hear it misappropriated for Braverman's narrow-minded populist purposes really is grossly offensive.
Robin Jarvis
Emeritus professor of English literature, University of the West of England

● The new qualification that Rishi Sunak wants to introduce faces all the problems your report mentions ('Out of touch with reality': Unions criticise Sunak's plan to replace A-levels, 5 October), but there are two others. First, whatever the new qualification is to be called, it cannot be Advanced British Standard because Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have their own educational systems. Britain and England are not synonyms, and to suggest otherwise is to betray basic ignorance.

Second, it would be a massive mistake to build the new qualification partly on T-levels, which a recent Ofsted review has severely criticised for inadequate industry placements, unqualified and inexperienced staff, poor teaching quality and high dropout rates. T-levels exacerbate the failure to develop a high-quality technical/vocational path.
Frank Coffield
Emeritus professor of education, UCL Institute of Education

● Reading about the weirdness of the Tory party conference reminds me of what now appear to be the very wise words of Arthur Balfour. When asked if he took note of the views expressed at the party conference, he said he would rather take advice from his valet. In those days the leader never attended the party conference, only speaking to the members the day after the conference finished. Given the events of the past few days, returning to the past and dissociating the leader from what has become the madhouse of Tory politicking as seen at this year's conference might be the best way forward for the party.
Derrick Joad
Leeds

> **To hear Shelley's poem misappropriated for Braverman's populist purposes really is grossly offensive**
>
> **Robin Jarvis**

● You report that the transport secretary, Mark Harper, believes that HS2 contract cancellation costs will be balanced by income from selling land previously acquired for the project (Sunak's 'spiteful' sale of HS2 land dashes Labour hopes of reviving project, 6 October). Such a zero-sum outcome would be great, if only the government hadn't already paid for the land, so it's spending twice (land and cancelled contracts) and raising revenue once (selling land). Perhaps the plan to make people learn maths all through their education should start with the cabinet.
Tim Exton
Seattle, Washington, US

● I note that some of the £25bn savings Rishi Sunak hopes to make from curtailing HS2's Birmingham to Manchester leg will be spent on filling and smoothing potholes in my area of the south-east of England, of which there are many of varying size and depth. This must be what the Tory party meant by levelling up.
Paul Franczak
St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex

● How are the Tories going to come up with future policies when there are no fag packets?
Paul Thomas
Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire

Swanning around



A colony of nesting mute swans at the Abbotsbury Swannery in Dorset. There are around 600 birds at the swannery, which was established by Benedictine monks
STEPHEN SMITH/GUARDIAN COMMUNITY

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The felled Sycamore Gap tree may rise again in years to come

The vandal of Sycamore Gap has robbed us of a much-loved landmark, a thing of beauty, a carbon store and a supplier of oxygen, but they have not killed the tree ('Like saying goodbye to an old friend': Memories of joy and sadness in tribute to felled sycamore, 30 September).

Below ground is a powerful root system, bent on staying alive. Dormant for the winter, it will wake up in spring and wonder where its headgear has gone. And there will be a fuzz of new shoots, setting out to replace the loss.

Depending on how it is managed, it could produce a multi-stemmed crown of significant size in a few decades, or a single stem could be selected to replace like for like. Either way, there's no need to grub up the roots and wait for a struggling sapling to establish.

The beautiful white timber of the fallen giant can be made into some wonderful piece of art for us all to admire while the tree rebuilds itself. Very soon, in tree-life terms (though sadly not in ours), it will be back to give future generations as much joy as before, but with a new piece of history behind it.
Marian Whittaker
Fairford, Gloucestershire

● Aside from the understandable emotion and anger, there appears to be a general lack of knowledge about trees and the natural world. So we well-meaningly blunder in, trying to do good while actually doing harm, eg by planting a sapling (when the sycamore will probably already be putting out new growth); by buying it from a garden centre (with soil that may be harbouring diseases); and in not understanding that the trunk, its root system and the surrounding soil are far better left alone.
Sam Gibson
Ravensthorpe, Northamptonshire

● The news of the Sycamore Gap tree seems to have caused an outcry, but why there wasn't the same concern when councils took to felling trees on our streets and roads some time back - Sheffield, can you hear me? The trees there were, to me anyway, just as beautiful as the "poetic" gap tree.
John F White
Hucknall, Nottinghamshire

● The fate of the sycamore on Hadrian's Wall brings to mind the similar fate of the Tree of Ténéré, the lone survivor of a more temperate era in the Niger desert, with no other trees or indeed vegetation of any kind for miles in any direction, also felled by human agency, albeit unintentional in the form of a drunk driver, in 1973.
David Jackson
Kelsall, Cheshire

Getting the measure of social mobility

Your editorial (Social mobility is being recast to give the Tories election-ready narratives, 15 September) purports to lay bare the problem with social mobility in the UK. But it simply reproduces an out-of-date narrative.

It accuses the Social Mobility Commission of obscuring the centrality of class. Yet our latest report is not an effort to "redefine" social mobility. In fact, occupational class is used in the main measure of socioeconomic background and as an outcome. But we also present evidence relating to other outcomes such as income, education, housing and wealth, because these also matter to people.

Further, and for the first time, we have presented breakdowns by ethnicity, gender, disability and geography. What emerges is a complex picture of opportunity. This might frustrate those looking for simple solutions, but it gives a more detailed understanding of how people from different backgrounds experience social mobility. It lays the essential groundwork for future policy recommendations.

Of course, data provides a picture based on averages. And within these averages are many examples of people bucking the trend, such as British people of Chinese and Indian background, who do extremely well on many outcomes even if their parents had low incomes or lower working-class jobs. We need to understand what helps them achieve this. It could shed light on how to improve social mobility for all.

There will always be work to do in this field, and differences of opinion about what the priorities should be. But the more fundamental point is this: no meaningful progress can be made unless we start with the evidence.
Alun Francis
Chair, Social Mobility Commission

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Ending child poverty will boost economy

While party leaders talk about boosting the economy, Barnardo's reports that 440,000 children sleep on the floor because families can't afford beds for them (Report, 29 September). This seems the right moment to remind our leaders that one of the most effective ways of boosting the economy is by ending child poverty.

Driving down poverty eases pressure on local resources, people are healthier, they gain more from learning, there's less strain on mental health services, more jobs are taken up and crime drops. This isn't some overoptimistic artist's impression: studies confirm the economic benefits.

Yet, sadly, talk is of cutting welfare spending, and it seems the two-child benefit cap, long considered one of the biggest drivers of child poverty, won't be lifted any time soon. Why? The money required is a small fraction of the government's overall budget. Forgive the mischievous comparison, but lifting the two-child cap costs less than the Home Office contract with the Australian company providing asylum barges.

As patron of the Child Poverty Action Group, I'm asking that parties commit to tackling child poverty, looking again at lifting the two-child cap, and strengthening other focused means of support, such as provision of school meals. Too many children are going to school hungry; if we're all about making "tough choices", why not start with families who have to make tough choices every day?
Armando Iannucci
Patron, Child Poverty Action Group

Prison lessons from the Netherlands

Your report (UK could rent prison space abroad to ease cell shortage, 4 October) did not raise the question of why the Netherlands, or any country, should have prison space to spare. A whole empty prison in the Netherlands was able to be brought back into use for Norwegian prisoners, for example.

From 2005 to 2022, the numbers imprisoned in the Netherlands fell from 50,650 to 30,380. In the same period our prison population rose from 76,190 to 80,659. In the Netherlands, the reduction is partly because it doesn't need the capacity. While prison is the answer in a number of situations, it is not the only way to punish offenders.

Authorities in the Netherlands have found that alternative methods work far better at cutting reoffending than short sentences. Methods such as curfews and *taakstraf* (requiring offenders to do specified work in their free time) are used often – perhaps backed up by a suspended sentence as "encouragement". Offenders stand a better chance of keeping a job or studying, and the state is not paying to feed and house them.
Dave Beakhust
Salisbury

● Winston Churchill once said we can judge a society by how it treats its prisoners. I wonder what he would make of this government's response to the prison overcrowding crisis.
Matthew Ryder
Buckden, Cambridgeshire

● Please could the Guardian begin a campaign to address the dreadful situation relating to "imprisonment for public protection" prisoners? Apparently, there are 3,000-plus prisoners who are held for far longer than the original sentence, and there seems to be no concern among the powers that be.
Anne Keat
Corsham, Wiltshire

No 10 parties and coronavirus deaths

Your review of Partygate on Channel 4 (This harrowing docudrama rams home a moment of national shame, 4 October) began by stating: "Nobody died because the staff of 10 Downing Street threw office parties throughout the Covid lockdown."

Surely, this is not correct. The purpose of lockdown rules was to limit the spread of the virus and thus reduce the mortality and morbidity caused by contracting it. Every time someone broke the rules, they increased the ability of the virus to spread.

I don't know if the prevalence of Covid infections among Downing Street staff has been studied. However, their actions meant a higher chance of infection in the wider community, and therefore of death.
Sally Read
Leeds

Corrections and clarifications

● An article about a failed reality TV show said that the potential contestants were later referred to as "the wannabe class" in the Channel 4 documentary The Great Reality TV Swindle. However, this reference was actually from a segment of an episode of ITV London Tonight about the contestants (Big bother, 30 September, Saturday magazine, p38).

● Last week's special Skin supplement had a couple of blemishes. The beauty influencer Dani Nicholls is 28, not 29 (Good in my skin, p13), and "dietitian" was listed as one of Thivi Maruthappu's job titles; that should have said nutritionist (How the experts look after their skin, p6).

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU**. You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Don't let the bedbugs bite on a sleeper train

Your article (France to deploy sniffer dogs to inspect train seats for bedbugs, 5 October) reminded me of an aunt's experience when she complained about bedbugs after a journey on a British Rail sleeper train. Back came an effusive letter of apology, saying "this has never happened before". Accidentally included with the apology was the original letter of complaint, on which was scribbled "send usual bedbug letter".
Roger Wilkinson
Leasgill, Cumbria

● How lovely to see a scarlet pimpernel (Country diary, 6 October). In my childhood in Essex in the 1950s they were everywhere. Now, in Warwickshire, I hardly ever see them. The Wildlife Trusts website says they are "in decline due to intensive agricultural practices".
Pam Lunn
Kenilworth, Warwickshire

● The Guardian style guide says gift is "not a verb (unless, perhaps, directly quoting a football manager or player: 'We gifted Barnsley their fifth goal')". Unfortunately, a full-page advert for the Guardian Weekly in G2 (3 October) failed to heed this advice three times.
Desmond Painter
Bournemouth, Dorset

● We know Rishi Sunak disapproves of some degrees, but surely he will like the superyacht design course offered by Solent University (Not just hocus pocus: try the UK's first degree in magic, 5 October).
Elizabeth Pearson
New Barnet, London

Established 1906

Country diary
Tebay, Cumbria

At this time of year, the Cumbrian farming community's attention turns to breeding animals for the following spring – and the sale or purchase of tups and bulls. While I stood watching the Herdwick sheep classes at the Westmorland Show, another farmer casually mentioned that he had a belted galloway bull for sale. As I was driving down the Duddon Valley the following week, I saw his pickup heading towards me along the lane. We wound our windows down and he asked: "Do you want to see that bull?"

The bull in question was grazing on the top of a fell, so we jumped on to the farmer's quad bike and drove up a steep, winding track through ancient woodland, past moss-covered walls and old, abandoned farm buildings. At the top of the fell, the woodland ended and bracken began to bash our legs as we drove past.

The cows were doing a job: to knock back the bracken on the fell top, and eventually to convert the area to grazed wood pasture as part of an environmental scheme. We had to leave the quad and walk the last few hundred metres, and, as I turned to look at the bull, the view behind him took my breath away.

The green inbye fields with grey stone walls glistened in the sun, with wooded hills opening out into the fell tops that stretched to the horizon. A panoramic view of part of the Lake District world heritage site was laid out before us.

We were not there for sightseeing, though, and so we turned our attention to the bull. He was a short, stocky type with a very clear belt – just what I was looking for. He was also friendly and had been easy to manage. I thought he would do well on our farm. After admiring the cows and calves, and making a video of everything to show my son, we began to walk back to the quad. It was such a lovely drive up there that I decided to walk back down through the woodlands, the floor soft and spongy under my feet.
Andrea Meanwell



ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER

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The Guardian Saturday 7 October 2023



Rachel Heller

Artist whose vivid works ranged from quick, deft still lifes to dense figure studies

In 1995, when she was 22, Rachel Heller had her first solo show, at the John Jones Art Centre in London. The exhibition sold out. This was not her first success, nor would it be her last. In 1986, when Heller was 13, a selection of her drawings was shown to the television grandee Jeremy Isaacs, who promptly bought one. In 2006, her figure study Lady Sleeping in Bed won the Hugh Casson drawing prize at the Royal Academy's annual Summer Exhibition. In 2015, Heller's work was included in an exhibition at the Senator Group's showroom in New York.

It is not difficult to see the reasons for her success. Heller, who has died of sepsis aged 49, had a particular bent for drawing, notably in pastel and chalk. Her range was considerable, from quick, deft Hockneyish works such as Flowers Still Life (2016) to dense, compacted figure studies such as Sleeping Woman (2006) and Stand Prose (2011).

These last, in portrait or landscape format, often have the feel of enamels or stained glass - discrete areas of vivid colour, parallel to the picture plane and welded together by expressive black outlines. Among her most memorable works is Windows 2 (2001), whose flat, planar composition hovers between representation and abstraction in a way that calls to mind German experimental painting of the early 20th century.

What makes Heller's success the more extraordinary is that she had been born with Down's syndrome. The fate of artists with Down's syndrome has tended to be consignment to that catch-all group known as "outsider artists", a term invented to include such variously disadvantaged subgroups as the psychotic, self-taught, imprisoned, naive and visionary. The American sculptor Judith Scott, who also had Down's syndrome, was shown and written about almost exclusively in terms of her condition. This was not the case with Heller.

> **"Among her friends were fellow artists - Maggi Hambling and Sir Peter Blake were both fans**

Born in London, the daughter of the gallerist Angela Flowers and her partner (later second husband), the management writer Robert Heller, Rachel showed signs of talent from an early age. Sent to a special needs primary school, Holly Court, near her parents' home in Highgate, she quickly began to draw - animated, stick-figure people merrily dancing and playing football. It was one of these, taken into the Flowers Gallery by her mother, that was bought by Isaacs.

Her enthusiasm for drawing grew. At 16, Heller enrolled on to a special needs art course at Hammersmith and West London College, where she was encouraged to sit art A-level. She went on to do a foundation course at the Byam Shaw School of Art, taking a diploma in 2001. This was followed by summer courses at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2001 and 2003, and two years at the Prince's (now Royal) Drawing School from 2005. She also went with a friend to sketch at the Victoria and Albert Museum every Sunday, often working from religious pictures but also drawing fellow visitors.



Heller's 2006 oil painting Windows; below, Heller with one of her works, Woman in a Pink Dress, in 2003
RACHEL HELLER/FLOWERS GALLERY; GRAHAM TURNER/THE GUARDIAN

Having a mother who was at the centre of the London gallery world exposed her to art at an early age. Among Heller's friends were fellow artists who showed at Flowers Cork Street or Flowers East - Maggi Hambling and Sir Peter Blake were both fans of her work - as well as non-Flowers artists such as David Hockney. "He signed my catalogue 'To Rachel'," Angela Flowers once complained.

If she showed frequently at her mother's gallery, particularly in the annual exhibitions of small-scale works called Small Is Beautiful, this did not, however, explain Heller's success elsewhere. Entries to the Royal Academy's summer show are submitted anonymously: her drawings were chosen by the RA's panel of judges six times between 2002 and 2016. In her 40s, Heller also began to make sculptures - clay-based mixed-media works that had the same merry density as her chalk-and-pastel figure drawings.

Like many people with Down's syndrome, Heller's speech was limited. Her father felt that her drawings stood in for words; it was how she communicated, he said, not least with him. Bob Heller was also insistent that his daughter should not be defined by her condition, seeing her instead as "simply a very amiable and slightly eccentric person". With her taste for denim jackets and a black fringe dyed pink, Heller could have been any voguish London artist, although she also had something of her mother's magnificence.

After a decade with Parkinson's disease, Bob died in 2012. He and Angela had moved out of London to Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire some years before, and Rachel went with them. Latterly, she and Angela moved again, to Ramsgate in Kent, to be near other family members.

"It's hard to imagine actually leaving her," Flowers had once said of Rachel. "That's when having a child with special needs is tough." As Rachel's brother Matthew said, mother and daughter had "never been apart for 50 years". Angela Flowers died in August; Heller died five weeks later, the day before her 50th birthday.

She is survived by her siblings, the children of her mother's first marriage, Adam, Matthew, Daniel and Francesca.

Charles Darwent

Rachel Heller, artist, born 15 September 1973; died 14 September 2023

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Jerry Moss

Co-founder of the A&M record label, home to stars including the Police and Janet Jackson

When a 50-1 outsider named Giacomo won the 2005 Kentucky Derby, it was not the first time that the horse's owner, the American record company executive Jerry Moss, had defied the odds.

Moss, who has died aged 88, began his working life as a teenager paid $75 a week for getting doo-wop records played on New York radio stations. Three decades later he and his business partner, the trumpeter Herb Alpert, would sell the record label and publishing company they had founded for a reported $900m.

The Kentucky Derby winner was named after the youngest son of Sting, the singer with the Police. That group's hits, and Sting's solo work, were released on A&M, the label Alpert and Moss had started in 1961, at first based in the trumpeter's garage, which contained a desk, a telephone and a two-track tape recorder. Their roster of hit-making artists would eventually include Alpert's Tijuana Brass, Sérgio Mendes, the Carpenters, Joan Armatrading, Peter Frampton, Squeeze, Quincy Jones and Janet Jackson.

Remarkably, they achieved their success without attracting the accusations of sharp practice customarily aimed at record company bosses of their era. In the eyes of their artists and of the industry they were an unusual partnership: a good cop and another good cop.

Moss was born in the Bronx, New York, the son of Rose and Irving Moss, a department store salesman. After graduating from Brooklyn College, he was waiting on customers at a resort club when his personality impressed Marvin Cane, a partner in the Coed label, who offered him a job and became his mentor. Over the next 18 months Moss learned the ins and outs of the music business at ground level, his weekly wage rising to $125 when a song called 16 Candles by the Crests, a multiracial vocal quartet, rose to No 2 in the national charts in 1959.

The following year Moss moved to Los Angeles. Turning down the offer of $35 a week to work in the mailroom of the William Morris Agency, a classic apprenticeship for aspiring showbusiness moguls, instead he struck out on his own as an independent promotion man. Soon a friendship with Alpert led to conversations about going into business together.

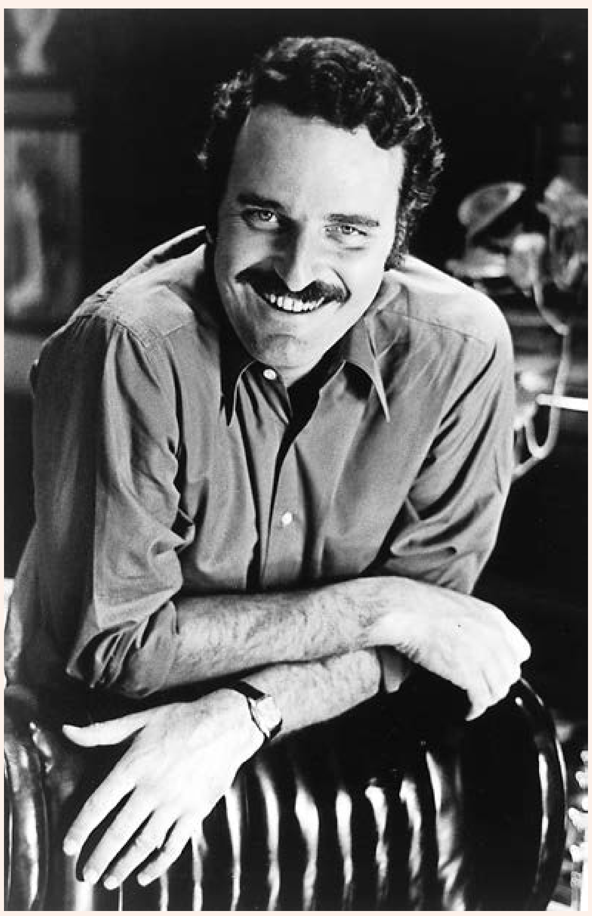
After early struggles, the breakthrough came in 1962 with Alpert's Tijuana Brass, an instrumental group featuring mariachi-style trumpets backed by top Hollywood session musicians.

Their first hit was The Lonely Bull, a Mexican-styled tune delivered over the excited noise of a crowd at a *corrida*, reflecting the enthusiasm of A&M's founders for visiting bullfights south of the border. Once the record showed signs of commercial promise, they borrowed the money to press several thousand copies. After that it was simply a question of getting the nation's record distributors to pay them promptly, a vital aspect of their business that became Moss's responsibility.

Soon they were adding staff and moving to offices on Sunset Boulevard. The Sandpipers' Guantanamera, a Cuban song from the 1920s, and The More I See You, by the Mexican-American singer Chris Montez, were other early hit singles, while A&M's credibility as an album label was established when, in 1966, the Tijuana Brass had five LPs in the US Top 20 at the same time. That year they also signed the pianist Mendes and his group Brasil '66, whose smoothly reupholstered version of bossa nova provided hit albums and singles, notably with Mas Que Nada and The Fool on the Hill.

A visit to the Monterey pop festival in 1967 convinced Moss of the need to move beyond the sort of soft rock and easy-listening music with which his label had become associated. Soon it was providing a home for the country-rock of the Flying Burrito Brothers and the dope-smoking comedians Cheech and Chong. From the UK, often through deals with the producers Denny Cordell and Chris Blackwell, came Joe Cocker, Procol Harum, Humble Pie and Cat Stevens.

The label was based in Herb Alpert's garage, which contained a desk, a telephone and a tape recorder



Moss set up A&M with Herb Alpert in 1961; they sold the company decades later for $500m MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

By the time the Carpenters arrived in 1970, A&M had become the world's largest independent record company, and to house their expanding operation, Alpert and Moss paid $1m for a property on North La Brea Avenue that had been the home of Charlie Chaplin's film company. The Carpenters' string of worldwide hits began with Close to You, We've Only Just Begun and Rainy Days and Mondays, featuring the affecting contralto of Karen Carpenter, artfully arranged by her brother Richard. Carole King's Tapestry was also distributed in the US via A&M in 1971, going on to sell 30m copies.

In 1976 the British singer and guitarist Frampton, formerly of Humble Pie, recorded an in-concert double album, Frampton Comes Alive, which went platinum eight times over in the US. After plundering the UK new wave for Joe Jackson and Squeeze, A&M then saw the Police become the world's biggest band with such hits as Roxanne and Every Breath You Take.

Sting's solo career would yield many more hits. Jones's albums for the label included the platinum-selling Sounds … and Stuff Like That!! in 1978, while Janet Jackson's 1986 album Control sold more than 10m copies.

In 1989 Alpert and Moss sold their label to PolyGram, a Dutch-German conglomerate, for around $500m, remaining involved for a further four years. Later they received a further $200m from PolyGram in settlement of a lingering dispute. Rondor Music, their song publishing arm, was sold for $400m.

After leaving A&M to its new owners, they formed a new label, Almo Sounds, on which between 1994 and 2000 they released hits by Garbage, a grunge quartet fronted by the Scottish singer Shirley Manson, and albums by the admired alt-country singer Gillian Welch. In 2006 Alpert and Moss were jointly inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Moss collected paintings, bred racehorses and pursued philanthropic projects. In 2020 he and his wife, Tina, donated $25m to the Los Angeles Music Centre.

His first two marriages, to Helen Rusetos and Ann Holbrook, ended in divorce. He is survived by Tina (nee Morse), whom he married in 2015, and by four children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Richard Williams

Jerry (Jerome Sheldon) Moss, record company boss, born 8 May 1935; died 16 August 2023

Birthdays

Today's birthdays: Dame Jenny Abramsky, chair, Royal Academy of Music, 77; **Felicity Aston**, polar explorer, 46; **Alison Balsom**, trumpeter, 45; **Mickey Brady**, Sinn Féin MP, 73; **Toni Braxton**, singer and songwriter, 56; **Yvonne Brewster**, theatre director and actor, 85; **Lewis Capaldi**, singer-songwriter, 27; **Simon Cowell**, TV personality and music executive, 64; **Alesha Dixon**, singer and broadcaster, 45; **Ann Haydon-Jones**, tennis player, 85; **Robin Jackson**, former chief executive and secretary, British Academy, 74; **Thomas Keneally**, novelist, 88; **Yo-Yo Ma**, cellist, 68; **Vladimir Putin**, president of Russia, 71; **Maj Gen Julian Thompson**, Falklands war commander and military historian, 89; **Jayne Torvill**, ice dancer, 66; **Sir David Wallace**, physicist, 78; **Thom Yorke**, singer and musician, 55.

Tomorrow's birthdays: Chevy Chase, actor, 80; **Matt Damon**, actor, 53; **David Gauke**, former Conservative and independent MP, former minister, 52; **Reed Hastings**, co-founder and CEO, Netflix, 63; **Paul Hogan**, actor, 84; **The Rev Jesse Jackson**, US civil rights leader, 82; **Martha Kearney**, broadcaster, 66; **Sadiq Khan**, mayor of London, 53; **Holly Lynch**, Labour MP, 37; **Bruno Mars**, singer-songwriter, 38; **Lady (Michelle) Mone**, founder, Ultimo, 52; **Bel Mooney**, writer and broadcaster, 77; **Prof Richard Morris**, archaeologist, 76; **Blake Morrison**, poet and writer, 73; **Ardal O'Hanlon**, comedian and actor, 58; **Ray Reardon**, snooker champion, 91; **Robert Saxton**, composer, 70; **Ursula von der Leyen**, president of the European Commission, 65; **Sigourney Weaver**, actor, 74.

Announcements

Birthdays

FEA, Annabel Lucy Beatrice. With much love on her 18th birthday to our beautiful granddaughter, Annabel. Grandma and Grandad.

Deaths

BOLD, Sarah. It is with great sadness that the family announces the death of Sarah on 24 September after a short and devastating illness. Sarah was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, sister and dear friend to many as well as being a dedicated family lawyer and a staunch supporter of the Labour Party. She enriched us all. Funeral service and wake at GreenAcres, Epping Forest, Friday 20 October, 11am - 4pm. Donations if desired to Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice.

In Memoriam

HERRING, John, 7 October 2003. It's been 20 years but still missed every day. Remembered with love along with Shirley who died 4/10/2022.

WEBBER. Nick. 30/5/1976 to 11/10/2004. Never forgotten, still so loved for the joy he brought to so many.

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Other lives



Marjorie Clare

Singer on the BBC radio comedy series Beyond Our Ken and Round the Horne, and on 1960s hit records

My friend Marjorie Clare, who has died aged 96, was, as Marjorie Daw, an elegantly glamorous and popular vocalist with the Oscar Rabin Orchestra in the 1950s and on many BBC Light Programme broadcasts and recordings. She also sang on hit recordings of the 60s, including Helen Shapiro's Walkin' Back to Happiness (1961) and Mary Hopkin's Goodbye (1969), written and produced by Paul McCartney.

An excellent musician, she was a fixture in the 60s lineup of the vocal quartet the Fraser Hayes Four, who provided the up-tempo musical interludes for 10 series of the Kenneth Horne comedy vehicles Beyond Our Ken and, subsequently, Round the Horne on the BBC Light Programme.



Marjorie Clare, centre, with the other backing vocalists on Helen Shapiro's 1961 single Walkin' Back to Happiness RANK FILMS

Born in Hackney, east London, to Millicent (nee Burriss) and Robert Turtle, Marjorie spent her early years in South Africa, where her father was an executive for British and American Tobacco. At school she loved singing hymns and became part of a group called the Four Little Sisters, who entertained soldiers injured in the second world war at Baragwanath hospital.

After attending Forest high school, Johannesburg, she answered an advert for talent in Variety magazine, and her first employment as a professional singer was with the Roy Martin Orchestra, as a member of his vocal group, the Melodeers, and subsequently as featured vocalist, broadcasting frequently on South African radio.

Encouraged by Roy Martin to try her luck in Britain, Marjorie, (or Marge, as she was always known) returned to the UK in 1948, eventually joining the Oscar Rabin Orchestra. There, she met the jazz drummer Kenny Clare and they married in 1952.

Kenny's stellar career was such that Marge happily took on the role of supporting him and looking after their family, adopting twins, Susan and Lesley, in 1962.

She continued to work as a busy session singer on the London studio scene, in vocal groups run by Mike Sammes, Beryl Stott and Rita Williams, and she recorded a solo EP, Personally, for Columbia Records in 1958. Marge can be seen in a DVD release of the Rank Organisation's feature For the Record, backing the teenage Shapiro on Walkin' Back to Happiness ("Whoopah, oh yeah, yeah") filmed at EMI's Abbey Road studios. She also made an appearance in a musical sketch in an early Morecambe and Wise TV show in 1963.

After raising her family in London and Surrey, Marge relocated to East Grinstead, West Sussex, where she played a key role in the upbringing of her grandchildren and volunteered at their school. She moved to Worthing in 2001, an area to which many of her musician friends had retired. She loved walks on the seafront with her dog, crosswords, reading, and using her iPad to keep in touch with friends and family.

Kenny died in 1985 and her daughters in 1990 and 1993. She is survived by her grandchildren, Gabrielle and Theo, and great-granddaughter, Lily.

Richard Young



Paul Bell

Wildlife enthusiast who spent decades rewilding a Shropshire field and improving local biodiversity

My father, Paul Bell, who has died aged 81, worked as an NHS dentist for more than 30 years, but his lifelong passion was for natural history. He had a detailed knowledge of the wildlife of Shropshire and was eager to learn about other environments through observation and reading. He was a member of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust council from 1976, served as trust president from 1988 to 1993, and remained a vice-president until recently.

In the 1970s, Paul started the task of rewilding the four-acre field at our family home near Betton Moss – a pioneering conservation initiative back then and one that he continued working on until his death. This resulted in the return of barn owls and increases in other birds, mammals and invertebrates, such as land snails and butterflies, including brimstones. He added ponds and erected nest boxes and refuges of all sizes, for birds and for bats, native bees and small mammals.

Through his presentations to groups, photographs and writings, he aimed to influence others. He championed conservation-focused land use as an alternative to formal country gardens or high-intensity farming. Paul co-authored a chapter in Wildlife in Trust, a book published in 2012 to celebrate 100 years of nature conservation in the UK, and he had a monthly column, Country Comment, in the local newspaper for 34 years.

Paul and his twin brother, Ben, were born in Penkhull, Staffordshire, to Elsie (nee Moores) and Benjamin Bell, managing director of Brittains paper mill. After Newcastle high school, Paul trained as a dentist at the University of Edinburgh before going into practice in 1966, first in Tunstall, Staffordshire, later in Market Drayton. The following year he married Jean Kimmel, and they went on to have two daughters – me and my sister, Kate.

His family will remember Paul for his love of fun and nonsense, and his ability to sit in patient silence, attentive to the slightest sound or movement of wildlife around him.

He is survived by Jean, his children, two grandsons, Louis and Emil, and his brother, Ben.

Haidee Bell



Margaret Henry

Film-maker and teacher who worked on documentaries that highlighted racial injustice

My friend Margaret Henry, who has died aged 80, was a film-maker and teacher with a passionate belief in fighting for a world free of racism and injustice.

She taught documentary and screenwriting at the London College of Printing from 1994 to 2002, and was then head of screenwriting at the London Film Academy until 2008. She had a significant influence on a generation of film-makers, particularly for her work as a researcher on Blacks Britannica, a landmark film by David Koff (to whom she was previously married) about racism in 1970s Britain.

Released in June 1978, the film was heavily censored before it was broadcast in the US on Boston's WGBH television channel. It is largely thanks to Margaret's efforts that an uncensored, digitised copy is available today.

In 1984 she produced Struggles for Black Community, a series of four documentary films for Channel 4, directed by Colin Prescod. Each film focused on one community: Tiger Bay (now Cardiff Bay) in Cardiff, Southall and Ladbroke Grove in west London, and Leicester. She also directed Invisible Workers for Channel 4 in 1987, a film about migrant workers from Colombia, Turkey and the Philippines.

Born in New York, Margaret was the daughter of Marie (nee Curnen), a librarian, and David Henry, director of admissions at Harvard, where he founded a scholarship scheme for African students at Harvard.

Following a progressive education at Putney school in Vermont, she studied at the University of California in Berkeley from 1960 to 1964, where she threw herself into the struggle for civil rights. An attempt to smuggle fugitive Black Panthers across state lines led to a serious car crash and a lifetime of back trouble.

While at Berkeley, in 1962 Margaret married Koff and travelled with him to southern Africa. The marriage was short-lived, but the two remained friends and he was an important influence in her life, as was her subsequent relationship with the radical Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano.

In 1968 she came to London, where she met Duncan Smith. They married and had two children, Caleb and Hannah. Their home, filled with discussions about art and politics, was a magnet for radical thinkers and creatives. They later separated, and eventually divorced in 2010.

Margaret's career as a film-maker led her to travel extensively. She visited Eritrea several times through the 1980s, taking photographs of female Eritrean fighters and making enduring friendships. At the height of the Bosnian war, Margaret became active in the German-based FrauenAnstiftung, a feminist organisation that supported women in eastern Europe.

In 2004, Margaret's involvement in an initiative called Reel Peace led her to deliver a film course in Sri Lanka, where she Prasanna Ratnayake. After numerous visa complications, they married in 2011, and established Postcolonial Films. Prasanna remastered the Struggles for Black Community series, along with Blacks Britannica, before his sudden death in 2017.

In spite of ill health, Margaret remained engaged with world affairs, and with friends, family and former students. She is survived by Caleb and Hannah, and her three grandchildren, Amelie, Quillan and Honora.

Stella Dadzie

Puzzles

Sudoku

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9.

Easy

	6	9			3			5
			8		2	3		4
							8	
		7						6
		3			4	7		
			9				5	2
			3	7	5		6	8
	9		6					

Medium

	5		8		2		3	
	4						7	
3								6
	6						5	
2	1						6	7
5		4				8		9
		5	2		1	7		
6		9		7		3		5

Expert

	5				9	1		
	9	2	1		3		4	
								8
		9	8					4
					5			3
		6	9					1
								6
	3	4	7		2		8	
	7				8	4		

Futoshiki Hard

Fill in the grid so that every row and column contains the numbers 1-5. The "greater than" or "less than" signs indicate where a number is larger or smaller than its neighbour.

```
□ < □ < □   □   □
    v
□   □   □   □   □
∧           ∧
□ < □   □ > □   □
v   v       ∧
□ < □   □   □   □
    v       ∧
□   □   □   □ > □
```

Kids Word search

Find all the listed in the grid, reading in straight lines, up, down or diagonally, either backwards or forwards.

BANJO, GUITAR, HARP, KITE, LUTE, PIANO, PUPPET, RACKET, SHOE, SILLY, SUPER, VEST, VIOLIN, YOYO

C	G	Y	H	B	G	N	P	O
J	N	A	L	U	I	C	I	J
L	R	E	I	L	R	N	A	N
P	A	T	O	S	I	S	N	A
E	A	I	H	R	U	S	O	B
R	V	K	P	U	P	P	E	T
T	E	K	C	A	R	I	E	A
O	Y	O	Y	E	O	H	S	R
E	V	E	S	T	L	U	T	E

Kids Countdown

Can you work out the answers to the sums below?

Easy	Medium	Hard
9	27	73
+ 41	+ 35	+ 50
÷ 10	*Half of it*	*Third of it*
+ 31	*- 19*	*- 37*
÷ 3	× 8	*Square root of it*
+ 43	+ 45	× 12
÷ 11	*2/3 of it*	+ 174
× 7	- 39	*4/9 of it*
- 17	÷ 11	+ 168
÷ 6	+ 46	*50% of it*
Answer	Answer	Answer

Solutions

Kids Countdown
Easy: 3
Medium: 51
Hard: 128

Sudoku *Easy*

Sudoku *Medium*

Sudoku *Expert*

Futoshiki

Kids Word search

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

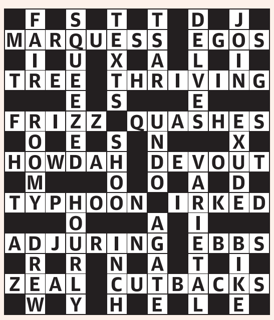
Killer sudoku
Easy

1	9	3	6	4	7	5	8	2
4	5	8	9	1	2	6	3	7
7	6	2	5	8	3	4	1	9
3	4	6	1	5	9	7	2	8
9	2	1	7	6	8	3	5	4
8	7	5	2	3	4	1	9	6
2	1	9	4	7	5	8	6	3
6	8	7	3	2	1	9	4	5
5	3	4	8	9	6	2	7	1

Medium

6	2	8	5	3	4	1	9	7
5	4	9	1	8	7	2	6	3
7	1	3	6	2	9	4	8	5
4	9	5	8	7	2	6	3	1
8	7	6	3	1	5	9	2	4
1	3	2	9	4	6	5	7	8
9	6	4	7	5	3	8	1	2
3	5	1	2	6	8	7	4	9
2	8	7	4	9	1	3	5	6

Codeword



Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,194

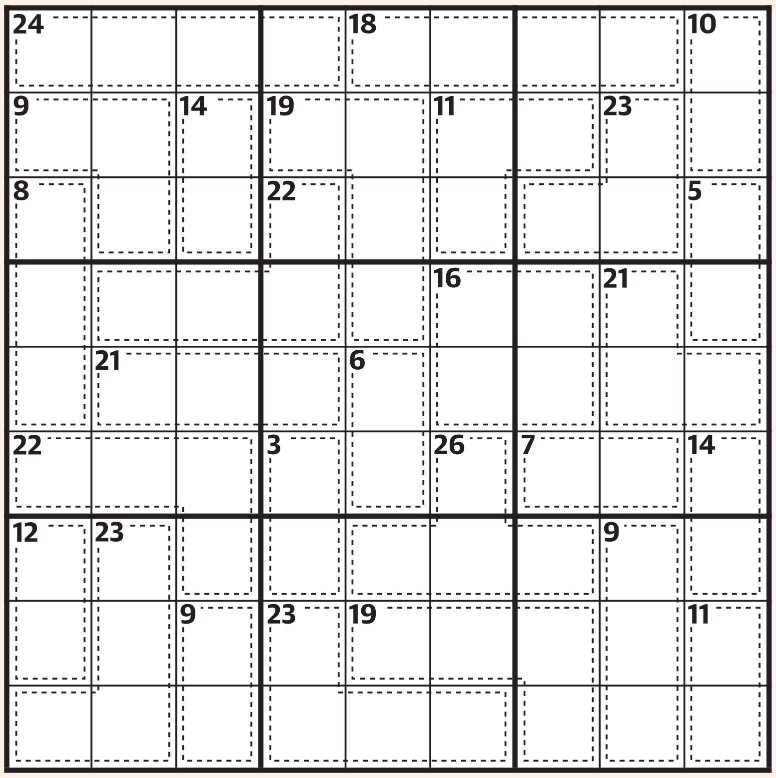


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Killer sudoku

Hard No 886

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



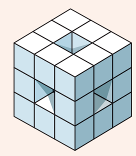
Chris Maslanka's puzzles

Pyrgic puzzles

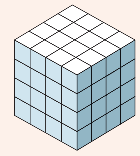
1 Pedanticus not only stamped but also raved on reading on the front page of a wonderful newspaper that "HMRC could neither confirm or deny the investigation". Can you spot what had set him off this time?

2 "Real fresh dairy cream" is long for "cream". What is $8 + 12(n - 2) + 6(n - 2)^2 + (n - 2)^3$ long for?

3 Garabaggio's latest masterwork (currently on show at *Rogues' Gallery* on Poppycock Terrace) is *Cube Between Dimensions*. According to the catalogue it's a 3 X 3 X 3 cube made of 1 X 1 X 1 cubelets. The 1 X 1 central portion between each pair of opposite faces has been punched all the way through, creating the piece shown here. Art it ain't, but perhaps it will make a simple puzzle. How many cubelets remain in the piece? In your head, now!



4 Here is a 4 X 4 X 4 cube of cubelets. The number of cubelets with at least one face open to the outside equals a whole number of times the number of cubelets in it with no faces open to the outside. What number? Show there is only one other cube of this kind such that the number of cubelets with at least one face on the outside equals a whole number of times the number with no faces on the outside. What are its dimensions?



5. Garabaggio painted the 4 X 4 X 4 cube red. If it is then broken down into its 4 X 4 X 4 cubelets and one is taken at random and flipped, what are the chances it lands red face upwards?

email: therealmaslanka@yahoo.com

Wordplay

Wordpool
In each case find the correct definition:

SUKKAH
a) Mesopotamian city
b) resting place on way to Damascus
c) olive-sized piece of bread
d) booth for the period of Sukkot

NEOPHRON
a) original thought
b) early adopter
c) Egyptian vulture
d) family genius

BABIRUSA
a) Russian witch in fairy tale
b) Midwife on the steppes
c) Hungarian soup
d) Indonesian wild pig

Jumblies
Rearrange the letters of ANTIPYRETIC to make another word.

University College
Identify these two words that differ only in the letter shown:
E (university)
B (college)
– with thanks to Tom Johnson

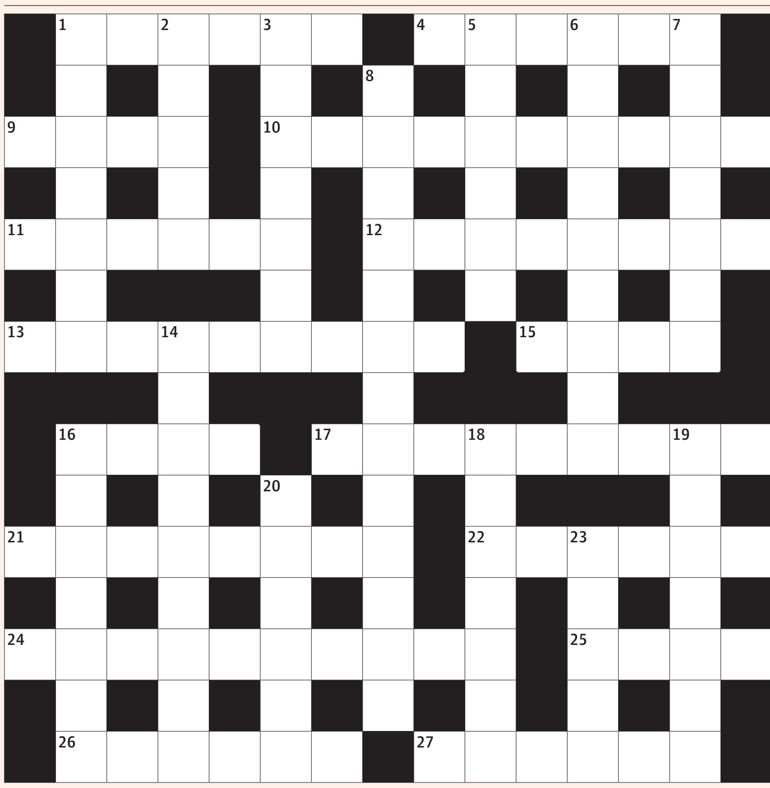
Appetising Alphabet Soup
Add each of the vowels A, E, I, O and U once and once only to G, H, M, N, R, T, T, & W, stir and make a single word.

Cultural Question of the Week
Which Early Renaissance painter was the wobbliest?

Missing Links
Find a word that follows the first word in the clue and precedes the second, in each case making a fresh word or phrase. Eg the answer to *fish mix* could be *cake* (fish*cake* & *cake* mix) and to *bat man* it could be *he* (bat*he* & *he*-man) …
a) ship pong b) zero rush
c) escape service d) parachute horse
e) place sun f) not hockey

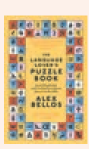
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Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,195 set by Paul



Across
1 Frank's result of Welsh pub crawl announced? (6)
4 Show respect before my hound (3-3)
9 A short film full of energy (4)
10 Biodiverse area with ground on fire: cover-up by right-leaning despot? (4-6)
11 Waste, speaking when wasted? (6)
12 Don't touch German on his way around Germany (5,3)
13/18/7 White House club wary of far-off guarded response to ambitions (2,7,4,3,4,3)
15 Class warfare, I think, somewhat regressive (4)
16 Ulcer or boil observed by one's ear? (4)
17 Slightly off, s-scent of gardens? (4-5)
21 Money bound to inspire premier in surprisingly moderate policy (8)
22 Overheard, a beautiful thing (6)
24 Sycophantic luvvy ultimately backing Yankee in Jolie? (5-5)
25 See 23 Down
26 Just monkey caught by foxy (6)
27 Originally clinker-built, say, sailing ship (6)

Down
1 Transfer fee in conclusion very, very much appreciated when raised (7)
2 Qualification as cowboy, say? (5)
3 Influential Victorian author clearly red-pencilled (7)
5 Outrage, Beyond the Fringe? (6)
6 One skilled in communication, and bagging gold medal (9)
7 See 13 Across
8 Rotten scum done over, taken apart by a big gun (4-4-1-4)
14 Current art is designed on paper (9)
16 Organism that is four-eyed? (7)
18 See 13 Across
19 Blow hot dish (7)
20 Cue in slang I screwed up (6)
23/25 Great passion consuming sweets after a turnover? (5-4)



The first five correct entries drawn each week win a copy of The Language Lover's Puzzle Book by Alex Bellos
Entries to: The Guardian Crossword No 29,195, **P.O.** Box 17566, Birmingham, B33 3EZ, or Fax to 0121-742 1313 by Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday 16 October.

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№106 | 7 OCTOBER 2023

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Why is Italy's population shrinking?
PAGE 18

ADVICE
The teen girls helping teen girls
PAGE 26

AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Julia Fox – Hollywood's wildest star – on chaos, kink and Kanye

INTERVIEW PAGE 12

The Guardian


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SATURDAY
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Lalalimola



Smart shot
The best pictures taken on phones
Jessica Chou

A Summer State of Mind, 2017
Shot on iPhone 7

"I just loved how the scene stacked up that day, under the strong morning light," says Jessica Chou. The photographer was celebrating her husband's birthday with a road trip from Los Angeles, where the pair were living, to San Francisco, then out east, stopping in Lake Tahoe before heading to Utah.

"We knew Lake Tahoe as a ski spot in the winter, so it was nice to see it during the summertime," she says. "The day we stopped there, the vista was all blue skies, snow-capped mountains, calm lake, miles of sand and, in the middle of all of it, this lady, who had staked out a piece of shade."

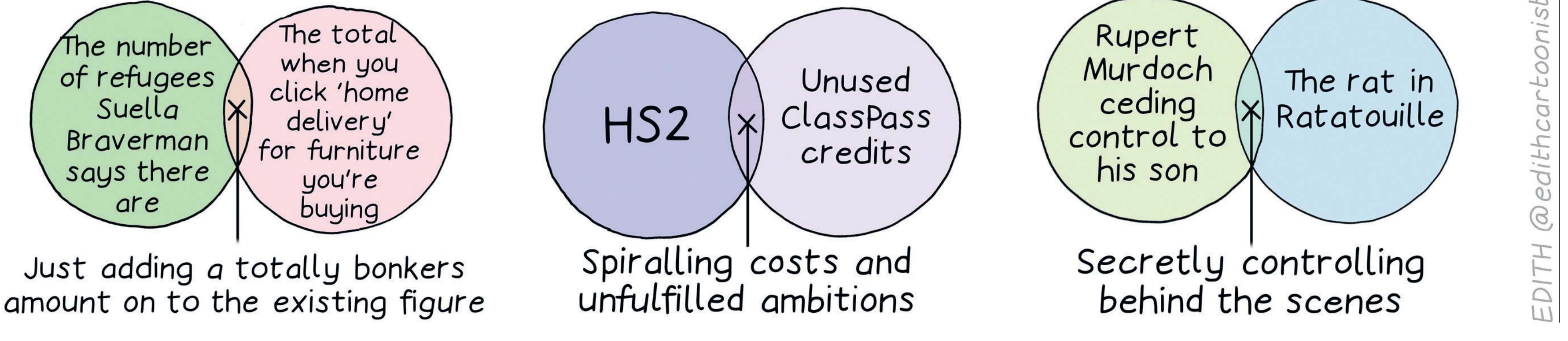
Chou was originally interested in capturing a general sunbathing scene, but was drawn to how the horizontal lines of the landscape and the vertical pole of the umbrella cut through the image in what she describes as "a kind of deadpan manner".

"I think this photo is really about the sum of its parts," she adds. "It's all the little details that provide context and contrast. Having said that, I do think the umbrella does a pretty good job of holding the picture together."

Chou didn't speak to the woman, but she did identify her book. "It's Nemesis by Catherine Coulter, a high-octane FBI thriller that goes through a labyrinth of events. Can't beat a detail like that."
Grace Holliday

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Edith Pritchett A week in Venn diagrams



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By the side of business

The singer on escaping an abusive teen marriage, a great snog with Mick Jagger, and rotten eggs

Q&A
PP Arnold

Interview: Rosanna Greenstreet



CAMERA PRESS

Born in California, PP Arnold, 77, joined the Ike & Tina Turner Revue as a teenager. In 1966, the group arrived in London to support the Rolling Stones but Arnold stayed, going on to become a solo artist. She had hits with The First Cut Is the Deepest and Angel of the Morning; later she appeared in musicals. In 2019, she released an album called The New Adventures of … PP Arnold, and in 2022 she performed at Glastonbury. The paperback of her memoir Soul Survivor, and her single of the same name, are out now. She lives in London.

When were you happiest?
Escaping an abusive teen marriage and being blessed with the opportunity to create a new life for myself and my two young children in London at the height of the swinging 60s.

Which living person do you most admire, and why?
Oprah Winfrey, as Maya Angelou and Tina Turner are no longer with us. These women are Afro-American queens who, despite growing up in the racist south experiencing physical, emotional and sexual abuse, rose to the top of their professions and are an inspiration to women everywhere.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?
At this time in my life, I quite like myself but, for a large portion of my life, I deplored being shy.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?
Arrogance combined with egotism and selfishness.

Describe yourself in three words
Loving, sincere, honest.

What makes you unhappy?
Being misjudged and underestimated.

Rod Stewart and I had a close call with the law in the 60s. A nosy landlord on suspicion of drug possession let police into my flat

What is your most unappealing habit?
I tend to say "you know" a lot, which irritates me as much as it probably irritates others.

What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?
My father was a very macho, controlling man and we clashed a lot. He told me that I would never be able to keep a husband with my attitude. He was right! I've had two short, unsuccessful marriages.

Would you choose fame or anonymity?
Fame. I like recognition for my work.

What was the last lie that you told?
I told a friend that I couldn't talk because I was catching up on my admin when I was actually watching How to Get Away With Murder on Netflix.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
I love chocolate and I like to shop.

What does love feel like?
Warm and safe.

What was the best kiss of your life?
Mick Jagger's soft, sexy lips.

What is the worst job you've done?
I worked in a Helms Bakery assembly line that separated egg whites from the yolks and from time to time a box of rotten eggs would come through. Need I say more?

What has been your biggest disappointment?
It has been in myself, for allowing individuals who I relied on to make important decisions in my life that left me alone to pick up the pieces.

How often do you have sex?
Not often enough.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?
Money.

What has been your closest brush with the law?
Rod Stewart and I had a close call back in the 60s when a nosy landlord, on suspicion of drug possession, let the police into my flat.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?
To live your best life every day, because tomorrow isn't promised.



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'A fly's wings blew one of my sculptures away' Willard Wigan in his home studio in Birmingham



Experience
I make the smallest sculptures in the world

As told to Elizabeth McCafferty

Growing up as a kid in Wolverhampton, I was fascinated by insects. When I was five, my dog destroyed an ant nest and I was devastated. Trying to make it up to them, I started building little houses for the ants, using wood splinters and leaves.

I then moved on to making little cups and saucers from silver foil, thinking leprechauns would come to use them at the bottom of the garden. When my mother saw my work, she told me that the smaller I made things, the bigger my name would become.

As a teenager, I began working with new materials, and my designs became more complicated. Then one day when I was 15, my mother and I were watching a religious TV programme. Somebody on the show said: "It's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." My mother gave me a needle and said: "Why don't you try to put a camel in there?" I'd been given a secondhand microscope as a present not long before, and this was the time to use it.

I chipped away at a piece of nylon thread with a broken piece of a razor blade, looking through the microscope. I made what looked like a camel – it was really more a cross between an elephant and a giraffe – and managed to squash it through the eye of a needle. My mum said she didn't think it was small enough. She usually said that when she saw my work, which encouraged me to make things smaller and smaller.

I use many materials to create my sculptures, including 24-carat gold. I bend, carve and manipulate them using tools that I make myself – these include diamond fragments mounted on hypodermic syringes, pliers made from hairs, eyelashes and nylon fibres. I even use threads of spider web for bindings and glue, and eyelashes and strands of dog hair as paintbrushes.

I sometimes work for 16 hours a day without breaks, and it takes me up to three months to finish a sculpture. I have to hold my breath during the sculpting process, and slow my heartbeat to control finger tremors. It isn't actually an enjoyable process – I can only enjoy it once I've finished.

I use threads of spider web for glue, and eyelashes as paintbrushes

My sculptures have taken me to incredible places. I was awarded an MBE in the 2007 new year honours list for my services to art. I also met the Queen in 2012: I gave her a tiny crown on the head of a pin, and told her she couldn't wear it because it's too small. She laughed.

In 2013, I received my first Guinness World Record for creating the smallest sculpture made by hand. It was a 24-carat gold motorbike that fitted inside a piece of hair. In 2017 I beat my record with a sculpture of a human foetus that measured 0.078mm by 0.053mm. I find it hard to celebrate these milestones, as there's always room for improvement. I was over the moon, though, when the University of Warwick gave me an honorary doctorate for my services to art and sculpture in 2018.

One time, a fly landed on a Cinderella carriage sculpture I was working on. The fly's wings blew it away. I couldn't find it again. It broke my heart for a long time. My second disaster was when I accidentally inhaled a microscopic Alice while making an Alice in Wonderland sculpture. Alice is now in Wonderland for ever. But it did give me the chance to make an even better one the second time around.

I was diagnosed with autism as an adult. In the 1960s, when I was at school, there wasn't much awareness of the condition. Teachers pointed me out as an example of failure; now I see my autism as a gift. It's pushed me to be the best I can be. I hold workshops in schools for neurodiverse children; I tell them my life story, show my sculptures, and help them create their own miniature figures out of Blu-Tack.

The microscopic world has always been my happy place. I've tried to make bigger sculptures, but small is best for me. We need to make sure we appreciate the little things in life. Small things can be overlooked, but they can also be mighty, too.
Willard Wigan

Willard Wigan's new collection of sculptures is displayed in the Miniature Masterpieces exhibition at Wollaton Hall in Nottingham until 6 November.

Do you have an experience to share? Email experience@theguardian.com

Portrait: Stephen Burke

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John, 42 – **says he would risk jail to allow a loved one to die by euthanasia**



George, 22 – **understands a desire to want pain to end, but believes life is sacred**

Dining across the divide

Can breaking bread bridge political differences?

Interview: Sam Wollaston

John, 42, Birmingham
Occupation *Legal regulator*
Voting record *Lib Dem, or Green when that has been a viable option*
Amuse bouche *John once drove his Ford Mondeo to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. He doesn't have a car any more, for environmental reasons*

George, 22, Manchester
Occupation *History of art student*
Voting record *George was a member of the Green party, then Labour, then Lib Dem and now Conservative, which is how he'll vote next year*
Amuse bouche *On a first date, George disturbed a wasps' nest and they both got stung about a dozen times. "We had a four-year relationship after that"*

For starters
George The restaurant was absolutely lovely inside. I'd never even eaten Vietnamese food before. John has been to Vietnam; he seems to have travelled everywhere.
John We shared a salt and pepper chicken starter, then he had a barbecue chicken curry and I had a coconut chilli pork main. The food was excellent.
George John was lovely – smiley, well spoken. He clearly showed an interest in listening and having a good conversation.
John It was clear early on that neither of us was going to be a ranter.

The big beef
John Euthanasia was a big one. I find it preposterous that we're humane enough to euthanise animals but not humans. For me, it's a no-brainer when you talk about things like terminal illness, constant pain, locked-in syndrome. People should have the choice of when to end their life.
George It's a natural biological response, if you're in great pain, to want the pain to end. You see animals go to any extent, biting their own limbs off or whatever. Animals have an instinct and act on it, whereas we should be able to balance or sublimate desires in favour of rational thinking and principles. I don't think we should ever intentionally end life, because I think human life is sacred. We don't have the right to.
John I'm an atheist, George is Catholic. There's not a lot of wiggle room arguing against faith. I would risk jail to allow a loved one to die if that's what they needed and wanted. I think it's a mercy, not a cruelty.
George Before I converted to Catholicism I would probably have agreed with John. But I would still have been concerned about the practicalities – how free people really are to make that decision, how do you do it without risking vulnerable people sometimes being killed off?

Sharing plate
John Neither of us is on social media. There can be some good things, but we both felt the negative influence it has – the time it takes out of people's lives, fake news, lack of science – outweighed the good.
George Social media is a tool, like a hammer. You can put up a shelf with a hammer or you can kill someone with it, but for me it seems there are more negatives. People act differently online; it seems it's a struggle to have a reasonable conversation.

For afters
George For me, abortion is a debate about when life begins. Conception seems like a good, straightforward answer to that: life begins when there is DNA, there is a separate being.
John I don't know enough about the development of an embryo, but I think when these cells start it's the opportunity for life. Many pregnancies don't come to term because of events in the early months, days, even hours, that people aren't even aware of, so I see it as the opportunity for life, not life developing. George said he always gets asked about rape, and he's even against abortion in those cases.
George I recognise how much pain there must be for a woman in that situation. But I don't think an abortion solves that problem, it doesn't make that trauma go away. We need to support them. And if that means adoption, we shouldn't ostracise people for giving up their child.

Takeaway
John I sometimes wonder if we're all guilty of not listening to people we're close to because we think we know them and their opinions. With this, there's none of that. You're more open to everything they've got to say.
George It was a moment of optimism for me – that people with very opposing views can sit down, have a conversation, and just recognise that the other is not crazy, but often we just have different fundamental starting points for why we think what we do.

George and John ate at Eat Vietnam, Birmingham; eatvietnam.co.uk. Want to meet someone from across the divide? Go to theguardian.com/different-views

ADDITIONAL REPORTING: KITTY DRAKE

Portrait: Andrew Fox

Flashback

Arlene Phillips on her 'too sexy' dance troupe, Freddie Mercury and a lifetime defying the odds

Interview: Harriet Gibsone
Main portrait: Pål Hansen
Styling: Andie Redman

1979 I was about to work on one of the most crazy films ever





Born in 1943 in Prestwich, Greater Manchester, Arlene Phillips is one of the UK's best-known choreographers. She spent her childhood immersed in dance classes, before moving to London to found Hot Gossip – a dance troupe both celebrated and castigated for their raunchy choreography on series such as The Kenny Everett Video Show. Phillips's career expanded into stage and music, and she choreographed the musicals Starlight Express and Grease, as well as videos including Private Dancer by Tina Turner, The Wild Boys by Duran Duran and I Was Born To Love You by Freddie Mercury. She was a judge on Strictly Come Dancing from 2004 to 2008 and has since written children's books, appeared on I'm A Celebrity and was awarded a damehood in 2021. Phillips co-created and directs House of Flamenka at the Peacock theatre in London from 17-28 October.

This photo was taken while I was choreographing Village People's musical comedy film Can't Stop the Music. I'm dressed in a simple red leotard with my red lips and hair. From the moment I first saw a bottle of Crazy Colour dye it changed my life – my hair went from pinks to purples, to turquoises and reds. I loved the way it turned out so vibrant, almost neon. The image captures a turning point. I was travelling the world doing auditions for the film, but I had also just discovered I was pregnant with my first child [Phillips has two daughters, Alana and Abi]. I was about to start work on one of the most lavish and crazy Hollywood movies of all time, yet I was preparing for a massive physical and mental adjustment.

Despite the magnitude of the situation, I wasn't worried about my career. I knew there would be a hiatus when the movie shifted location from filming in New York to Los Angeles, so I asked Allan Carr, its producer, if I could withdraw for a short time so I could have my baby. He said: "Of course. We'll arrange everything for you." They absolutely did. The team got me a guru who stayed by my side and helped me meditate so I felt calm while we were travelling, and once Alana was born – she was breached so I had a caesarean – I had a nanny and a Winnebago and could go back to work after two weeks. My baby was always close by, so I could look after her. It was an extraordinary time. Giving birth to Alana gave me an immense outpouring of joy that I'd never known before. It was incredible and it altered me massively. From that moment on, I was filled with a new kind of love.

When Hot Gossip started in 1974 we performed in clubs and became the darlings of the beautiful people. The models and the film stars all loved us. The TV industry was less keen and deemed us "too sexy" for the screen. It wasn't until we were booked to do the Kenny Everett show that everything changed. We were on the cover of every newspaper. Hot Gossip had well and truly exploded. Even so, I still found it remarkable that an English choreographer and her random, different group of dancers were descending in LA to be part of Can't Stop the Music, but I think we offered something new and different. The film is now regarded as one of the worst musicals on film, but the months I spent working on it were a glimpse at the world as I'd never known it before. From the places we got to stay in, to the cars and private jets, we were living a dream life. Allan hosted Hollywood discos every night. It was so far away from my childhood in Prestwich.

I started ballet lessons when I was three. My parents loved culture, and even though we had very little money, they took me to see a Russian ballet at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester when I was very young. After that, I knew that dance was all I wanted to do. It was all I could think about. As I got older, I assumed I would become a dance teacher at schools, as I couldn't leave home: my mother passed away when I was 15, and I had a younger sister and my dad was of ill health. It was a tough life but deep down was this drive to do what I wanted to do. I had an inner determination.

As a child, I remember seeing a girl who lived down the road in a pair of black leather patent shoes. I thought they were the most beautiful things I'd ever seen and I wanted them so badly, but my parents wouldn't be able to afford them. I knew even back then that I needed to engineer my life to become the type of person that was a "has", and not a "has not".

I felt that tension at school, too: I was low in the pecking order when it came to academia. I had a constant feeling I would get left behind. I realised I was going to have to fight my way to become a success.

HAIR AND MAKEUP: SADAF AHMAD. ARCHIVE IMAGE: COURTESY OF ARLENE PHILLIPS



2023 When asked for advice, I say: 'Get used to rejection.' I had to take my own advice at the end of Strictly

Since then, I have had so many career highlights. It's my job to be calm and secure - inspiring people with confidence to move. Some artists are not interested, but it's finding that twinkle; that encouragement and connection. When you get that, you're free.

Freddie Mercury was incredible for this. He had ideas and wanted for you to be part of a collaboration. His aim was to be daring, adventurous and to push boundaries. He was such a positive spirit. Being in a room with him was like a firework popping off around the studio. It was like working with an enigma.

There have been challenging moments, too. I was absolutely passionate about being on Strictly Come Dancing. I was one of the original judges, and I was even in the pilot with Len Goodman. The show held something very special in my heart, so when my contract wasn't renewed that was a real blow.

What made it harder was that I had suffered a loss just before. My wonderful manager had died, the person who had looked after my career from the start and who saw Hot Gossip dancing in a club one night and wanted to get behind us when nobody else did. Having the immense loss of someone I loved, and the loss of a job that I loved, happening concurrently was a real low.

I often get asked for advice by young people who want to pursue a job in theatre and musicals. The thing that I always say - rather than be passionate and work hard - is that you need to get used to facing rejection. You will feel it every day of your life in this industry. Give yourself 48 hours, cry and sob, but get it out of your system.

With great difficulty, at the end of Strictly, I realised I'd have to take my own advice. I had to pull my head together and think: "You had a career before. And it will continue." I gave myself a moment and then got back on my feet.

When I look back at this image I see it as a moment of change and upheaval, but also of happiness and certainty. I knew I was one of the most fortunate people in the world. I knew I would have my child, and that I would keep her by my side. She would be the most important part of my existence and we would go on to travel the world together. It was, and still is, a pretty fantastic life.

‘I COULD GO TO THERAPY AND UNPACK IT ALL – BUT I DON’T HAVE

After a wild and troubled young life growing up in New York, Julia Fox came out of nowhere to become the breakout star of indie hit Uncut Gems. Then – after a month dating Kanye West – things somehow got even weirder. She talks to *Emma Brockes*

Portraits: Erik Madigan Heck
Styling: Chloe Hartstein



TIME FOR THAT’

There is a motif running through Julia Fox's new memoir that hints at the incredulity one may experience while reading it. "I can't believe this is my life," writes the 33-year-old in Down the Drain, and the phrase is not a rhetorical flourish. The story of her rackety early years in 2000s Manhattan takes in periods as a runaway, an artist, a dominatrix and a provocateur of a kind that grows out of a very particular (and unsupervised) downtown New York childhood. She has overdosed twice; been in a series of abusive relationships with men, starting in her mid-teens; and fleetingly been committed to a psychiatric ward – and this is before she appears in a hit movie and becomes tabloid bait for briefly dating a controlling and coercive superstar. As a result, says Fox, she was for a long time a titanic pain in the arse to almost everyone she encountered. "I really hated when people felt bad for me. So it's almost like I was an asshole on purpose, to prevent that pity. I was a jerk – entitled and selfish. But I feel like you have to be when you're in survival mode."

That survival mode is still in place, although, Fox hopes, these days it manifests in somewhat diluted form. Since 2019, when she won her first acting role in the movie Uncut Gems alongside Adam Sandler, her persona has been outsized and conscientiously unruly; in the years following her debut, she would appear on the red carpet pulling wild faces and mouthing off about her own genius, or posting drunken screeds about her ex-husband on Instagram ("Have you seen this deadbeat dad?"). That's not how she appears today. At a studio in Manhattan, Fox is pale, quiet, thoughtful, younger-seeming than her age – when I ask how old she is, she says without thinking, "22", before correcting herself – in shorts, T-shirt and flip-flops. She speaks with the flat, nasal affect of someone trying to repurpose a lot of memories from the bad into the merely boring, an objective she certainly achieves in the memoir, a picaresque tale told with a jauntiness often at odds with the events she is describing, and that she embarked on, she says, partly out of a love of writing and partly to make sense of everything that has happened to her. It is also, I suspect, an effort to wrest back control of her reputation after the warping effect of her extremely brief, extremely public involvement with Kanye West in 2022. "I tried to be as fair as I could and as truthful as I could. It was a purge, I would say." For long stretches of the book, I itched to reach back, retrospectively, and call social services.

Fox still lives downtown, with her two-year-old son, Valentino, and is determined to create an environment for him as far from the one from which she emerged as possible – which is to say, one in which when she wasn't being screamed at, she was being totally ignored. As recounted in the memoir, her childhood and adolescence sound like a heavy-handed public service announcement from the 1970s about the perils that befall latchkey kids. Fox's father, a builder, was volatile and verbally abusive, so that "I never really knew who I was going to get. He could be the best dad ever, or the literal worst." Her mother was absent for long stretches when she returned to her native Italy, and, when she was present, fought explosively with her daughter. At 11, Fox was drinking, partying and being hit on by 27-year-old men. At 12, she and Trish, her best friend, persuaded a sketchy tattoo artist to give them tattoos and nipple piercings. Her dad's main piece of parenting advice was "weed, heroin, cocaine … all that shit is fine. But stay away from PCP angel dust. It makes hair grow on your brain." When Fox was 16, she absconded with her boyfriend, "Ace", a minor-league drug dealer, whom the cops threatened with charges of kidnap and statutory rape (the age of consent in New York is 17). Ace ended up in prison, at Rikers Island, on unrelated charges and wrote to inform Fox he wanted to murder her and her family. "I decide that I've had enough," she writes, with the guilelessness that informs the whole book. "I'm going to end things with him."

One result of all this was a range of tics and behaviours that started young and persist. "I would bite my nails, suck my thumb, hum a lot. I was humming and twirling my hair, I had a lot of security objects." She would sometimes sleep with the hairdryer on, "for the warmth and the white noise, and because I wouldn't have to hear whatever was happening, the fighting". Her relationship with food, she says, was and remains very weird. "I eat a lot of candy, and sugar. Sometimes I don't eat one not-sweet thing for the whole day. It's *all* candy, it's *all* ice-cream." Compared with overdosing on heroin, of course, "it's not life or death. It's what I'm left with, but it's pretty harmless. I mean, I could get diabetes and high blood pressure or whatever. But I'm not going to, like, die. Hopefully."

This is how Fox is calibrated; to downgrade one set of hair-raising experiences against a set of others that are infinitely worse. When she was 14, she went to live for a while with a host family in Italy, in the "depressing little town" her mother came from and still periodically lived in on the edge of Lake Como. She was enrolled in Catholic school, which went as well as you might expect (among other things, she discovered that two girls who sat behind her in class were "keeping track of the colour of my thongs in their notebook"). The narrative, briefly, turns into a conventional coming of age, a period piece full of Miss Sixty jeans and Nokia phones and this exciting new thing called Myspace. In a phrase that will make anyone over 40 smile, Fox says: "I went through my Facebook messages of 2006 and really transported myself back in time." Even here, however, there is something wrong with the picture. After Fox is asked to leave the host family for smoking and skipping school, she pretends to her parents she has moved in with her mother's family, but instead goes to live in her mother's empty apartment. It's a sad image, I suggest, a 14-year-old living alone. Fox looks taken aback. "At the time I loved it." What if her son was living by himself at 14? "Yeah. I can't even wrap my ahead around that. It's not an option."

She can be dry and bleakly comic about these years of her life. She can also be entirely detached. Back in New York and out on the town, Fox and a friend get so drunk that when a bunch of men kerb crawl and offer them booze, they get into the car and end up the next morning out of it in a motel with blacked-out memories of the night before. This falls into the category of things Fox says "my brain has erased that are traumatising". When she is 16, she makes a desultory attempt to kill herself – she insists it is a superficial gesture to get the drug dealer boyfriend off her back – and ends up in a psychiatric ward, where she is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Within weeks of release, she overdoses in a hotel room with "a bunch of Irish men, from Ireland" whom she meets with a friend in a bar, and is brought round by paramedics. Shortly after this, she responds to an ad on Craigslist for a "dominatrix hiring, no sex, no nudity, no experience necessary". She takes the job, because, she explains, it pays better than, "these minimum-wage jobs [that] offered no benefits except the things I could steal".

These events unfold breathlessly, unreflectively, and with a self-romanticising air that has probably been chosen in avoidance of harder-to-bear narratives. In the "dungeon" downtown, Fox's first punter is a man in his 50s, scrupulously polite ("I'm Stewart but my friends call me Stew"), who stands with his balls in a vice and likes having cigarette smoke blown through a tube into his mouth. "I try not to recoil at the sight of his small, flaccid penis, dangling limply between his chunky legs," writes Fox, who is in the last year of high school at the time. A middle-aged religious man asks her to sit on his face in her jeans. A middle-aged British man asks if he can flog her. A middle-aged Indian billionaire pays her to talk to him for four hours. The men say: "Wow, you're so beautiful. You're so young." After working in the dungeon for a month, Fox writes, she has got enough money to move into her own apartment and quits, taking the contacts for her clients with her.

Nowhere in this story does Fox use the word paedophile. By the time she encounters these men, she has been preyed on for so many years that, at the relatively advanced age of 18 and in a BDSM club with surveillance and protection and camaraderie, it seems to her a stable and enviable environment. "It was the stuff before the dungeon when I was being used," she says. At a party at a friend's house when she is 11, a 27-year-old man kisses her, gropes her and tries to sleep with her, shuffling off when she hides under the duvet and pretends to be asleep. She characterises him as the first "of many. I didn't want to be repetitive in the book, but there were … a lot of paedophiles. I didn't even realise that's what they were until I was much older, or just how many. They were everywhere, and kids back then didn't have the information they do now. Now, kids know when someone is too old, whereas back then it was just like: hot older guy!! The media didn't help, either. It was totally normal for a 17-year-old celebrity to be dating 30-year-old whoever. It was normalised."

In the dungeon, there were rules. She felt looked after. She honed skills that would come in handy later in life. "It taught me how to perform. It was my first acting gig. It was improv, all day, with different characters. It taught me to read a room and kind of know what somebody wanted to hear even before they knew it." She came to regard her time there as an experience in empowerment, and something else, too. "Even though the clients would say, 'You're so beautiful, you're so this, you're so that', I didn't believe it before I saw that I was being booked the most. And taking the most money." After years of neglect and abuse, she found the hard metric welcome. "I was like: oh. Now I understand my worth."

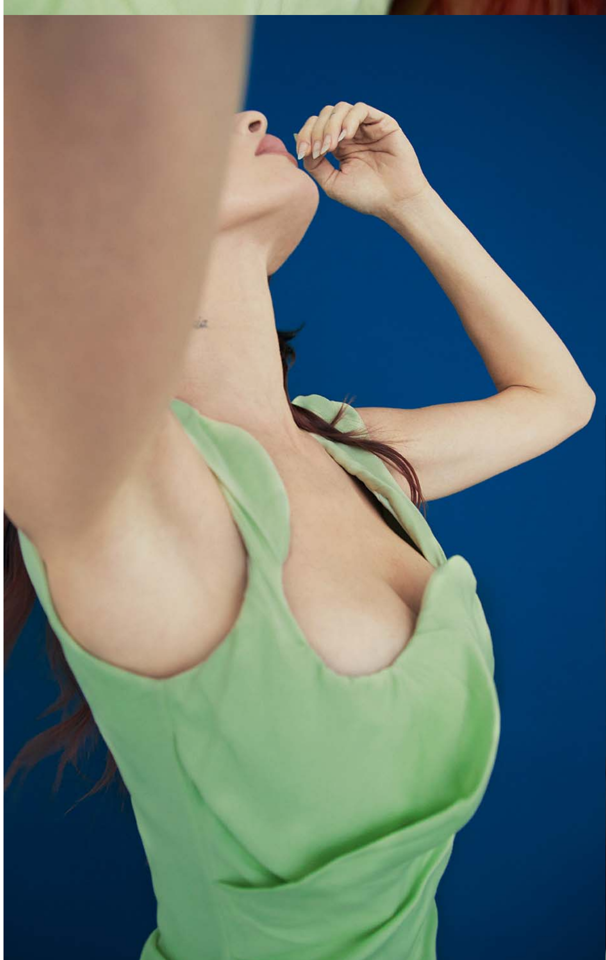
IF IT WASN'T PART OF FOX'S PLAN to become an actor, that's because she had no plan at all – which is, of course, not the same thing as not having ambition. Swimming around the clubs downtown in the mid- to late-2000s, Fox had a style and velocity that garnered attention. She tried to get a design label off the ground, bankrolled by the Indian billionaire she had met in the dungeon, who, for five years, paid her rent and living expenses. (This was a sweet deal, thought Fox, not least because "Rohan" was only mildly controlling.)

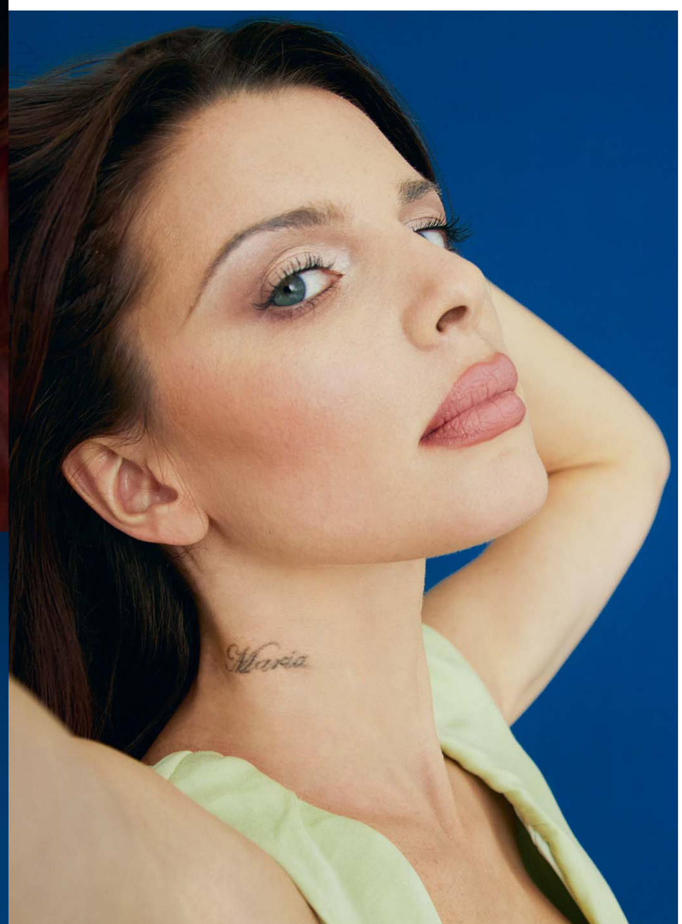
She put together a few local art exhibitions that seemed to go down very well. A book of photos and artefacts chronicling some of her misadventures, and that included her ex-boyfriend's inmate tag and the missing poster her parents disseminated – featuring the wrong height and date of birth for her – when she ran off with him, was presented at the New York art book fair by a friend. An art exhibition called PTSD followed, featuring, Tracey Emin-style, the recreation of a bedroom she had stayed in during a road trip to Louisiana, and in 2017, another show, somewhat in the style of Nan Goldin, called RIP Julia Fox, in which she dropped her own blood on to canvas. These productions were energetic and original and won Fox the attention of i-D magazine and Dazed. She suffered low self-esteem, but on the flip side, she says: "I always felt that something was going to happen, and so did the people around me. I had this

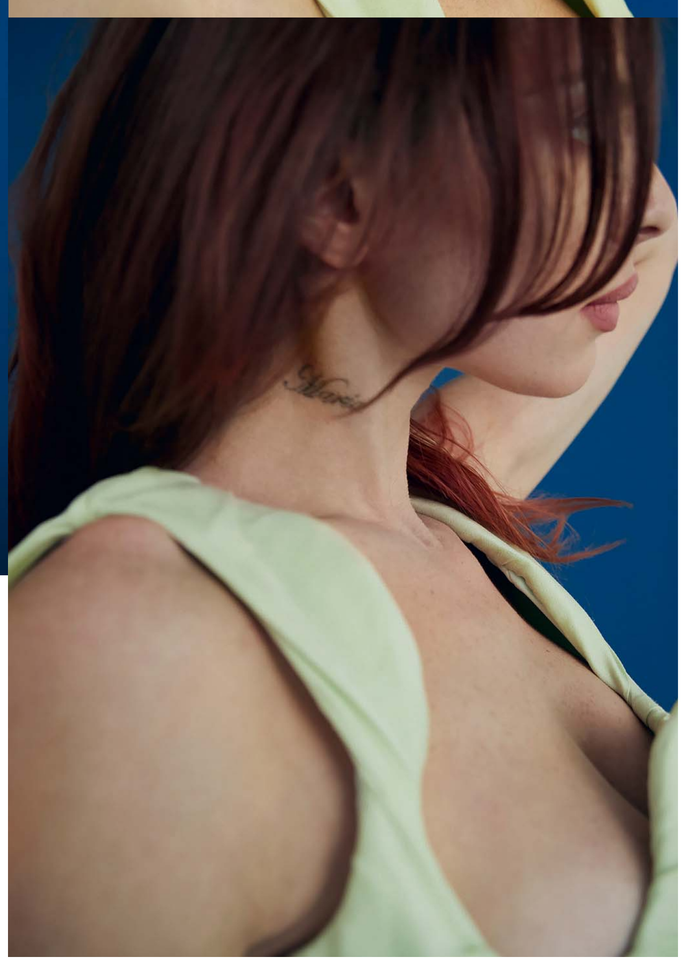




‘THERE WERE A LOT OF PAEDOPHILES. I DIDN’T EVEN REALISE THAT’S WHAT THEY WERE’







supernatural force inside that I could *do anything*. But then, there’s that other voice that comes in immediately after and says, ‘No you can’t, you’re delusional.’ It’s always a struggle between ‘I know I’m capable, I can do anything’ and ‘You’re a piece of shit, you’re not worthy’.”

A friend of Fox’s had been working on a film that no one in their circle thought would amount to anything. This was Josh Safdie, who writes and directs with his brother Benny. A few years later, after the pair had made Good Time, an indie hit starring Robert Pattinson, that movie - Uncut Gems - was bought and Sandler was cast in it. Josh urged Fox to audition for the female lead. It’s the kind of thing friends say to each other all the time and in 99% of cases never go anywhere. But Fox turned up, dazzled the casting agents, was invited to do a scene with Sandler, and effectively performed her way into the role of Julia - rackety moll to Sandler’s spiralling jewellery hustler - with no acting experience whatsoever. The film was a critical hit, and Fox’s life changed.

Except that, in some ways, it didn’t. Fox had a baby with Peter Artemiev, a pilot she met at the Uncut Gems wrap party, married two months later, and divorced 18 months after that. She made a movie with Steven Soderbergh and Benicio del Toro called No Sudden Move (2021). As her fame grew, so it appeared to Fox, at times, that she had merely advanced to attracting a different kind of abusive man. In late 2021, a message reached her via a friend that a “famous artist” had been asking after her. This was West (who has changed his name to Ye), and a phone call between them was arranged. Over subsequent days, he called her multiple times and they talked for hours, or rather, in Fox’s account, “he talks for hours and I mostly listen”. She writes: “He loves my ideas and thinks I’m really smart.” When he invited Fox to meet him in Miami for New Year’s Eve, she politely declined - her son wasn’t yet a year old - so Ye chartered a private jet. She relented, taking her friends along with her. Within five days, he had put her friends on the payroll as stylists and asked if she wanted to take the “relationship” public.

Before we go further, it should be pointed out that Fox dated Ye for less than a month, during which time she saw him a handful of times. It’s also worth mentioning that this was the period during which he began his campaign of harassment against his ex-wife, Kim Kardashian, abusing her via social media and publishing her private messages. Almost every time Fox and Ye met, the meeting was preceded by the arrival of a stylist and wardrobe, so she could change into something he had approved. On one of their early dates, a photographer was present; afterwards, Ye sent photos of them making out to the editor of Interview magazine and asked Fox to write something about how they met. (He didn’t like what she wrote and sent in a new, entirely fabricated version, which is still online, and which, she told him, correctly, sounded dumb.) Describing one of their few, unobserved hang-outs in a hotel room, she writes: “We spend the day playing Uno and a game that involves highlighting positive words in the dictionary.” He told her: “I’ll get you a boob job if you want.” Ah, the romance. She said no thanks and started eyeing the exit.

Fox is great in these pages, funny, and outraged, and all over the place with indecision as she wrestles with the conflict of being simultaneously sucked in by the huge gravitational pull of Ye’s fame, repulsed by his self-indulgence, and ignited by the opportunities - who can blame her? - that being seen by his side will afford. “I went into it with good intentions and feeling all this *could* be real, and it could be amazing, and he could open so many doors.” At some point in that brief month, Ye said he was going to get her a million-dollar modelling deal and there followed a trip to Milan for fashion week, where, writes Fox: “I meet Donatella and sit front row at the Versace show, which I certainly never thought would happen.” Then, in Paris, they argue after he tells her to stop bringing her friends on trips, and she tells him she’ll only do so if he stops bringing his horrible entourage. He


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stops answering the phone – his assistant tells her he's on a "month-long phone break" – and shortly thereafter they "split up".

The entire episode is ridiculous, and it's clear to Fox, now, that she was simply "being used as a pawn in this grand master plan to get back at his ex-wife. That's humiliating. That's a really shitty position to be in." Still, looking back, she knows herself well enough to know that if it hadn't been for Valentino, her baby, pulling her back to reality, she would have chucked in everything and done whatever Ye asked. "I know I'd have gone on this ride." As it was, she got irritated, then depressed, then jauntily dismissive. One day, an NDA arrived via Ye's assistant and he texted her: "I can't be friends with you if you don't sign it."

"I'll live," she replied.

If Fox had imagined that being seen with Ye would help her out in life, things didn't necessarily shake out that way. Before Ye, she had been talked about as a hot new acting talent. Afterwards, as front row seats dried up, the conversation changed. "A lot of people were like, oh, she's only famous because of Ye. It's like, no, I've been around and I've been in a full fucking movie and I did a lot of things before that, too. It's that you're just hearing about me now. That relationship doesn't define me. It's one little blip."

Most of the blips in Fox's life have been dealt with via a rigorous programme of denial. When she talks about her problems with men – specifically her pattern of choosing abusers – she says: "I could go to therapy and unpack it, but I don't have the time to do that. I'd rather just swear off 'em." This is her mode of living – "I just brush everything off" – and she sticks to it.

Occasionally, however, something happens that she has a harder time keeping at bay. Shortly before auditioning for Uncut Gems, Fox received an excited message from Liana, a friend, advertising what she called "an invitation I can't refuse". This turned out to be from "a billionaire with a private jet [who] wants to take us to Art Basel in a few days!" Fox and Liana adjourned to Teterboro airport, boarded a private jet with an "intoxicated rich guy", and his bro-y sidekick.



WEST WORLD
Fox with Kanye West in Paris in January 2022 (left) and in the film Uncut Gems with Adam Sandler (above)

Sipping champagne, Fox briefly thought, "How lucky I was that my prayers for a sugar daddy were answered with Rohan rather than some jerk like this." Then she blacked out. When she woke up, hours later, she says she was in a hotel room in Miami, naked in bed alongside the billionaire. "Did we have sex?" she asked, and she says he lifted his head enough to slur, "You wanted to pee on me" before passing out again. Horrified, she grabbed her luggage and ran to a friend's Airbnb. Later, when the man texted to ask after her, she told him she had lost a diamond earring, whereupon he took her to a high-end jewellery store in Miami and she shook him down for $6,500. It didn't even the score, says Fox, but it helped.

What to make of this story? In the book, she bounces through it in the same jaunty, flippant register as all the others. Now, she refers to it as "the date rape on the private jet". She assumes she was drugged. She says that before revisiting the memory for the memoir, it is "something I had really tried to pretend didn't happen". Afterwards, she says, it didn't occur to her to go to the police. What would have been the point? Relative to her attacker, she was a nobody with no resources. Now, however, "if something happened like that I would definitely take the appropriate action. 100%." She hesitates. "Then again, I don't know if I would. And then go to battle, have years of my life taken away and have to relive it? We've literally seen what happens, with Amber Heard. It's like: is it worth it at the end of the day?"

Fox says she is a big believer in karma. "I can be very spiteful and vengeful," she says. "I love getting a good revenge, it makes me salivate. But I also have the wisdom to know: don't do anything, it'll do it on its own. Shitty people will get what's coming to them." The presence in the culture of a great many truly shitty people suggests this is categorically untrue.

The difference for Fox, these days, is that where in previous phases of her life, when bad things happened, she would spiral towards drugs and drink, now she tries very hard to stay sane for her two-year-old. She is not entirely sober. "I don't go to AA meetings. I love AA, and I've gotten a lot of tools from it, but now I really just abstain. I'll have a glass of wine if I'm going out but it's very rare. I stopped smoking weed, because I was such a pot head. I stay away from the things I know will derail my life and I have no control over." The pandemic happening so soon after her debut movie came out put a big dent in her progression in the film industry, but she has some roles in the works. She is promoting the book. And, in the meantime, she lives with Valentino, who, she prides herself, engages in none of the "twitchy things" she had going on as a child. She has a stable co-parenting relationship with her ex-husband, Peter. And her son, she says, "is so happy, kind, generous, loves to dance". For all her difficulties, Fox has never had trouble giving herself praise when it's due. "I'm like, oh, mission accomplished." ●

Rape Crisis offers support for rape and sexual abuse on 0808 802 9999 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in Scotland, or 0800 0246 991 in Northern Ireland.

'I'M GONNA BE A DOMINATRIX! I CAN MAKE $1,000 A SHIFT': DOWN THE DRAIN EXTRACT

I NEED TO GET A JOB. Not only to fulfil my probation requirement but because I have no money. The numbers I had stolen off my dad's credit card stopped working, and we can't steal cheques from my friend Serena's dad any more because he threatened to have us arrested and he's totally the type to do that. I go on Craigslist and I already know where to look. I scroll down to the bottom of the page: "Adult gigs". I scan the job postings – prostitute, stripper, slutty assistant, prostitute, slutty maid, prostitute, prostitute – until I read the words: "Dominatrix dungeon hiring. *NO SEX* *no nudity* *no experience necessary*." I click on the listing and I'm met with instructions.

1. Send in a recent full-body picture.
2. Write a quick bio with age, height, weight and level of experience.
3. Describe in detail most sadistic sexual fantasy.

Easy. I pull what I think is a good photo off my Facebook page and begin tapping away at the keyboard. I don't have experience as a dominatrix but I certainly have some experience in hating men. I press send, close the tab, and resume my job search when I hear the familiar: "You've got mail." Shocked that I've received a reply so quickly, I open the email, from a man named Ronald. He instructs me to meet him at a cafe in Chelsea at 1pm.

Until now, all my jobs were in the service industry. I worked at an ice-cream shop for $7 an hour, forced to wear a 50lb cow suit in the sweltering summer heat while my co-workers stole my tips. Then there was the shoe store on 86th Street, where I was relegated to the hosiery section since hardly any customers went there. And Veniero's, the iconic pastry shop by my school that hired me simply because I spoke Italian. I often showed up late and stoned, making a beeline for the basement, where the barrels of cannoli cream awaited me. I would plunge my whole hand into the thick, sweet, creamy goodness and slurp it off my fingers. These minimum-wage jobs offered no benefits except the things I could steal. But this new job posting for this mysterious dungeon said I could make up to $1,000 a day.

As I head uptown on my heavy cruiser, I can't help but feel a little nervous. What if this is all a scam and I get kidnapped and sold into sex slavery? I park my bike and carefully scan my surroundings, making sure there aren't any sketchy white vans parked on the block. When I enter the cafe, I notice it's completely empty except for an older gentleman in dark sunglasses and a black leather trenchcoat sitting alone in the corner.

As soon as we lock eyes, his face lights up. "Wow, how is it possible that you are even more beautiful in person?" I smile politely and thank him, even though I don't believe him. "I was very impressed by the scene you wrote, are you sure you've never done this before?" "Well, not professionally," I say with a giggle. "You mean you do this in your sex life?" I giggle again at the words "sex life". "In third grade my dad used to make me have playdates with the biggest nerds in my class. He said it was because he felt sorry for them. One of the boys was Fabien. I used to make him get on his knees, and then I would ride him around like a pony and make him pick things up off the floor with his mouth."

I can tell he's thoroughly amused. "How's it possible? You have the face of an angel!" he exclaims. "It's my best weapon!" I say. His expression suddenly turns serious. "When can you start?" I pause. "Tomorrow?" "Perfect. I'll let the manager know." He extends his pale, veiny hand and I shake it firmly, just like my dad taught me. "One more thing. What is your mistress name?" "Mistress name?" "Don't think you can go around using your real name." I think for a moment and then confidently reply: "Valentina." "Valentina, great choice." He watches me ride off on my bike with a cheesy grin plastered across his pasty face.

On the ride back home, I feel invincible, weaving in and out of traffic, taking shortcuts. When I arrive, I call my friend Liana at the leather shop she now works at on West Broadway. "I got a job!" I proudly exclaim. "You did?" She sounds surprised. "Yeah, I'm gonna be a dominatrix! They said I can make, like, a thousand bucks per shift." There's a brief silence on the other end of the line. "You sure it's not a scam?" I roll my eyes, annoyed. "No, Liana, I met with the guy at a cafe. It's legit." "Oh, wow."

I hang up and start digging through the infinite piles of clothes, pulling out a pair of fishnets and setting aside a pair of black pumps in preparation for my first day as a professional domme.

This is an extract from Down the Drain by Julia Fox (HarperCollins, £20) published on 10 October. To order a copy for £17.60, go to guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES. PREVIOUS PAGES: SET DESIGN: ANDREA HUELSE. HAIR: JOHN NOVOTNY AT OPUS BEAUTY. MAKEUP: DAVID RAZZANO AT OPUS BEAUTY. SET DESIGN ASSISTANT: HENRY HARPER. GREEN DRESS (PAGE 15): RACHEL GILBERT. JACKET(OPENING SPREAD), BY SAINT LAURENT; SKIRT, BY COMME DES GARÇONS; BOTH FROM ALBRIGHT FASHION LIBRARY



GHOST TOWNS



'There's no one here any more,' an old man says of Massiola (above), where no babies have been born since 2015 and the last shop closed in 2020

Massiola is a village slowly dying, and it's not the only one. Falling birthrates and dwindling populations are affecting the whole of Italy, in a slow-motion 'demographic winter' being weaponised by the far right.
Tobias Jones reports
Photographs: Andrea Frazzetta

THE BLACK LETTERS painted on the walls – announcing the "hostelry" and the "bar" – are fading to nothing. Both have been closed for decades. There's no building work going on either: in one garden a cement mixer has been rotated upwards, painted yellow and turned into a plant pot. Many of the houses are empty and have hand-written For Sale signs on their front doors.

This is Massiola, a mountain village 772 metres above sea level, west of Lake Maggiore in the northern Italian region of Piedmont. It's a beautiful place. Alleyways snake between houses with terraced gardens. The air smells of manure and woodsmoke. But apart from the crash of the river in the valley below and the clang of distant cowbells, it's eerily silent. "There's no one here any more," says one old man. No babies have been born since 2015; 23 residents have died. Since the turn of the century the population has dropped from 173 to just 117.

Massiola is slowly dying and it's easy to see why. It seems better suited to a simpler age: the central road is so narrow, you have to park your car at one end. Phone reception is iffy. In 2020 a landslide crashed through the middle of the village and its last remaining shop. Since then, bread has been left for residents in a cupboard under the arches of the parish church.

It was very different in the first couple of decades after the second world war. With a population of about 350, the village had a sawmill and specialised in making wooden spoons and pins for wine barrels. There was a nearby marble mine, and tin, pewter and aluminium works closer to Omegna, a town farther down the valley.

"It was so different back then," says Renzo Albertini, 74, the down-to-earth mayor of the village. "In the mid-60s there were two food shops, three bars, the hostelry, 200 sheep. Every family had a cow, most had a pig … "

But the marble quarry closed in the 60s and the demand for wooden pins and spoons declined. The village school closed in the early 2000s as families slowly migrated down the valley into the larger towns and cities. "No one works the woodlands now," Albertini says wistfully. "There's no life here any more." Without the young, an elderly woman adds, "there's no future".

Massiola is a prism through which to see a slow-motion crisis that is affecting the whole of Italy: its "demographic winter". There was widespread shock in April when figures from Istat, the national statistics agency, revealed that the population of Italy had fallen by 179,000 in 2022, a 0.3% decline. Deaths now far outstrip births which last year, for the first time, fell below 400,000 a year. Shortly after the figures were released, Elon Musk opined that "Italy is disappearing". According to the educational news site Tuttoscuola, 2,600 Italian primary and infant schools have closed since the 2014-15 academic year. The number of students is constantly falling: it's predicted in this academic year there will be 127,000 fewer schoolchildren nationally than the previous year.

Demographers consider 2.1 a golden number. That's the fertility rate, the average number of children born to every woman, that allows a country's population to remain stable (it's called "the substitution index"). Italy's fertility rate is now 1.24. In certain regions, it's even lower: in Basilicata, in the south, it's 1.09 and in Sardinia, 0.95. Every year, Italy's average age creeps up. It now stands at 46.4 and almost a quarter of Italians are 65 and over. The traditional population pyramid – with a wide base of youngsters thinning to a point of a few elders – now looks more like an urn; if current trends continue, it will eventually be inverted. Projections suggest Italy's population will fall from 59 million now to 48 million by 2070, with numbers in the south and islands thinning from 20 to 14 million. Given national pension provisions are like a Ponzi scheme, requiring new contributors to finance those who take money out, this imbalance will become an acute economic problem, requiring either huge tax hikes or drastic pension cuts.

Demographers and sociologists have long been aware of the problem of Italy's birthrate but it has suddenly become a hot political topic. Prime minister Giorgia Meloni sees in it an issue that speaks to the gut values of the far right because it appears to confirm a conspiracy theory that Meloni, and her party, repeatedly refer to: "ethnic substitution" or "the great replacement". In 2017 she said there had been "a planned and desired invasion" of immigrants, and a year later repeated the antisemitic trope that George Soros "finances ethnic substitution". The absurd idea that a rich Jew deliberately brings in cheap labour from the developing world to reduce costs, increase profits and undermine Christian values is widely held among politicians in Meloni's Brothers of Italy party. In April, Francesco Lollobrigida, who is the partner of Meloni's sister and now minister for agriculture, linked the demographic crisis to this conspiracy theory, saying the issue of births needed to be addressed because "we cannot give in to the idea of ethnic substitution". Even the mainstream media stokes this paranoia: Panorama, a current affairs and lifestyle magazine, recently put on its cover various black and brown faces under the title "Italy without Italians".

The births issue is also a topic that allows Meloni's government to reassert a rigidly traditional concept of family. Meloni frequently opens political speeches by saying "I am a mother" and uses Mussolini's old slogan of "Dio, patria, famiglia" ("God, fatherland, family"). For the Italian right, "family" and "life" have become talismanic words. The country's "Family Day" was instituted in 2007 by a Catholic umbrella organisation to oppose then-prime minister Romano Prodi's equality legislation for cohabiting and same-sex couples; it returned in 2015 and 2016 to oppose similar legislation.

There has been a sharp rise in charities and political parties rooted in traditional Catholicism that oppose abortion and civil partnerships: Pro Vita & Famiglia ("pro-life and family"), Culle per la Vita ("cradles for life"), Il Popolo della Famiglia ("the people of the family") and Difendere la Vita con Maria ("defend life with Mary", which creates cemeteries for aborted foetuses where graves are marked with the names of shamed mothers). The membranes between these organisations and the government are porous: Family Day's founder, Massimo Gandolfini, is now Meloni's drug tsar; its former spokesperson, Eugenia Roccella, is the





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newly created minister for family, births and equal opportunities. The label is misleading: she opposes civil unions, IVF, abortion and same-sex parenting. “Abortion is a great contradiction for women,” she said recently, “because it is a free choice but also a wound.”

As Brothers of Italy is a direct descendant of Benito Mussolini’s National Fascist party, it’s hardly surprising it has a soft spot for his pro-natalist polices: in his Ascension Day speech of 26 May 1927, Mussolini announced the country had to increase its population from 40 million to 60 million. It was an attempt to acquire great-nation status through sheer force of numbers: without an adequate population, Mussolini said, “one doesn’t build an empire, one becomes a colony”. He introduced a tax on unmarried men aged between 25 and 65, banned the sale of contraceptives and created prizes for weddings and births.

So far there have been few concrete pro-family policies from Meloni’s government: only the halving of VAT to 5% on nappies, milk powder and child car seats. But every month the births rhetoric is ramped up. In May Meloni and Pope Francis shared a stage (both dressed in white) at an annual gathering of pro-family organisations, whose slogan – “Quota 500,000” – is the target number for annual births by 2033.

The event was organised by Gigi De Palo, a sandal-wearing Catholic and father of five, who tells me about the “traumatic consequences” of falling birthrates. “Our GDP puts us at ninth place in the world, but in 20 years’ time, we’ll be 25th,” he says. “The pensions system will collapse, the health system will collapse … ”

Fears that Meloni’s government is attempting to return women to stay-at-home, child-rearing roles has convinced many feminists to take action. In November 2022, Agnese Vitali, a politically neutral professor of demography at the University of Trento, was due to take part in a conference entitled The Demographic Emergency in Italy, chaired by a journalist from the religious magazine Famiglia Cristiana. “Suddenly,” Vitali says, “there were all these banners announcing, ‘I decide about my body.’ There were megaphones and chants. It was impossible to go ahead.” One flyer distributed by the activists spoke of “the reactionary gender roles patriarchal society imposes on us: to be wives and baby-making mothers for the fatherland”.

Trento, in the far north of Italy, has a long history of radicalism – it was the centre of the country’s 1968 uprisings, comparable with those of Paris – so perhaps such protests were unsurprising. But something similar happened in May in a more high-profile and seemingly sedate setting. At the Turin book fair, family minister Roccella was due to talk about her book A Radical Family – a strange conversion story that recounts her journey from radicalism to arch-traditionalism. She grew up in a family at the coalface of the civil rights movement in the 60s and 70s; her parents were active in the Radical party and she considered herself a feminist. But Roccella, who thought she was an only child, slowly pieced together the story of Simonetta, her younger sister, born prematurely and abandoned by her mother when still in an incubator. Simonetta died and the busy, campaigning parents didn’t return to bury the corpse. Roccella was appalled by a mother who had a “drastic repulsion” towards maternity, and she has since developed the fanaticism of a convert, moving from Berlusconi’s Forza Italia to Meloni’s Brothers of Italy.

‘THERE USED TO BE TWO FOOD SHOPS, THREE BARS, THE HOSTELRY, 200 SHEEP. EVERY FAMILY HAD A COW’

As she took the stage in Turin, activists burst in, blocking her speech for hours by singing, chanting and holding up banners. The feminist group Non Una di Meno (“Not one less”, a reference to the refusal to accept the often fatal violence against women) was present at both protests. “For this far-right government,” says Eleonora, one of the group’s activists, “this is completely ideological.” She maintains that the battle for births is a front for rolling back hard-won rights: “In city councils run by Brothers of Italy, the paternity and maternity rights of same-sex couples have been withdrawn – they no longer have the automatic right to go and see their child in hospital, they can’t pick them up from school.” In June, a magistrate in Padua sent a court a list of 33 lesbian couples registered as parents since 2017, demanding judges erase the non-birth mother’s name from the register. The case will be ruled on in November.

In its first year, Meloni’s coalition has already drafted four anti-abortion bills, including one recognising the legal rights of the foetus that, if passed into law, would in effect end abortion. Surrogate births are already outlawed in Italy, but Meloni’s government has drawn up legislation to make it illegal to seek surrogate mothers abroad, too. The government has been candid about its disdain for all forms of family outside traditional norms. Roccella opposes the “marketisation of gametes” and “transhumanism” (the use of technology to enhance humanity): “I’m rightwing,” she says, “because I fight for the conservation of the human condition.”

So the births debate sits on the faultline of the culture wars: one side frets about the erosion of rights while the other laments the rise of cancel culture and the thought police. After the protests, Roccella complained there was “less and less freedom of thought and expression: some things you can no longer say, or even think”.

DOWNHILL FROM MASSIOLA is Verbania, a sedate town nestling on a triangle of land pointing into Lake Maggiore, and the capital of a province that recorded a 12.8% drop in births in 2022. “It makes me gloomy,” says Magda Verazzi, a rightwing councillor for equal opportunities and youth policies, who wears bright clothes and a ready smile. “There’s this egotism in which a child is seen as a limitation. We’re fixated on physical appearance, social position, the car we have, our career.” She is childless and it sounds almost like self-criticism. But she laughs and points at all the dogs in the piazza: “We’ve replaced love of children with love of animals.”

The businesslike, leftwing mayor of the city, Silvia Marchionini, says Italy’s lack of modernity militates against young families: “Everything here is outdated: school hours, after-school activities, the lack of parity between men and women.” Marchionini, who also doesn’t have children, believes the lack of births reflects a profound malaise in Italy: “There’s a distrust of the future, this grievance that it’s impossible to make anything of yourself any more. This is a country in distress. If the right comes to power, it is not because there’s joy in the air.”

Many statistics bear out her point that birthrates are a barometer of wellbeing. In the midst of the Covid pandemic, which hit Italy hard, there were 14.7% fewer births in January 2021 than in the same month in 2020. One hospital, in Trieste, experienced a 20% decrease in births after the lockdowns. “Italy is a nervous and pessimistic country,” says one sixtysomething woman I meet. “It’s no longer cheerful, and the young are so angry that they don’t have what their parents had.”

But if pessimism appears an effective contraceptive, so is extravagant materialism. Many of the older people I talk to are scornful of how young parents spoil their cherished only child. “It’s part of the provincial mindset of Italians,” says Roberta, a retired teacher with one child and one grandchild. “Your child has to have the right shoes, all the right material things. So of course parents can’t afford to have more than one.”

Quite apart from cashflow problems, many young women just don’t want the hassle. Alessia, 32, works in a car rental firm and lives with her boyfriend. She earns €1,300 (£1,100) after tax and pays €300 towards rent. “I don’t want to have children,” she says. “It doesn’t interest me. But even if I did, I wouldn’t be able to. I struggle to get to the end of the month with just a dog.”

Of six close female friends in their early 30s, only one has a child. “Relationships are more unstable than they were in the old days,” she says. “And we’re not like our mothers – we want a partner by our side, not a husband you have to cook for every night. There are so many other enticing options instead of having children.”

THERE’S A CLEAR CONSENSUS among demographers about what needs to be done to reverse Italy’s plummeting birthrate. And it’s the opposite of a reversion to the traditional family. “For decades now,” says Francesco Billari, rector and professor of demography at Milan’s Bocconi University, “there has been a

ANDREA FRAZZETTA/THE GUARDIAN





Mayor Renzo Albertini with one of Massiola’s few children (far left) and councillor Magda Verazzi, who says Italy’s birthrate ‘makes me gloomy’


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positive correlation between female labour market participation and fertility. In countries and regions where there is greater gender equality in the labour market, fertility is higher."

All the statistical evidence suggests that birthrates rise where there are progressive social policies: in Sweden, with its ample maternity and paternity leave and social welfare provision, the fertility rate is 1.84. Germany, which in the mid-90s had a similar fertility rate (1.3) to Italy's current figure, now has a rate of about 1.6. "In addition to the strengthening of allowances and tax rebates," Billari says, "Germany has pushed access to nurseries and extended school hours and parental leave. In short, it has significantly improved the work-family balance, especially for women previously forced to choose between having children and working."

The hypothesis that progressive policies encourage births is confirmed by statistical differences within Italy itself. In the autonomous province of Bolzano, near the border with Austria, €200 is given as childcare benefit for children under three, there's help for first-time homebuyers and efficient educational and health services. Here the fertility rate is 1.65, a figure closer to Denmark (1.72) than most of Italy. Vitali points out that Bolzano has a nursery provision of 67.5%.

These figures convince many experts that the problem is not what it first appears. Linda Laura Sabbadini, a director at Istat and a former chair of the G20's Women 20 group, says, "I'm convinced the real emergency isn't the birthrate: it's about women and young people. We have one of the lowest percentages of employed women – 51.3% compared with more than 70% in Germany and the UK, and 68% in France." Even for those in work, the challenges of raising children are steep: Italy has very few free nursery places.

Research repeatedly shows Italian women express the desire to have the same number of children as northern Europeans (the average is just over two), so demographers conclude that there are clearly obstacles to fulfilling their wishes. The most obvious is that Italians stay in the parental home well into adulthood: males on average don't leave until 31 and women at 29 (the figure for Sweden, for both sexes, is 19). As the former UK minister David Willetts once quipped, "Living at home with your parents is a very powerful contraception." Italy holds the European record for the highest age of first-time mothers (31.4) – and if you start late, you're unlikely to have many children.

Most young Italians don't leave home because they simply can't afford to. The median net monthly wage in Italy is €1,501 and starting salaries are even lower. Rents continue to rise, in the past year by 12% across the country. According to Istat, 5.6 million people in Italy suffer from "absolute poverty", while Eurostat calculates that more than 20% of Italians are at risk of poverty.

Those financial headwinds are even stronger for those in the "fertility range". Italy has the highest proportion of Neets (not in employment, education or training) aged 15-29 in the EU: 23.1%, as against 13.1% (in Portugal and Spain, countries superficially comparable with Italy, the figures are 9.5% and 14.1%). The lack of job opportunities and meritocracy has led to a brain drain, too: the number of Italians living abroad has doubled to almost 6 million since 2006.

'THERE ARE MORE ENTICING OPTIONS THAN HAVING CHILDREN AND A HUSBAND TO COOK FOR EVERY NIGHT'

One of the great paradoxes of the situation is that, according to the sociologist Chiara Saraceno, birthrates are low precisely because the family is so predominant in Italy. "The family is still a strong institution," she says, "from which economic solidarity and care redistribution are expected. Social policies take this solidarity for granted, sometimes even impose it. This overburdens families and reduces the autonomy of younger generations." The country, she says, is caught in a spiral where families are forced to pick up the slack in social welfare provision, looking after elderly people or a first child who has no nursery to attend, and thus have less desire to create, and care for, multiple children.

There is a solution to the problem, but it's politically fraught. "Births can't resolve this imbalance," Sabbadini says. "It's demographically impossible. Let's say we do arrive at two children per woman: those children will become workers in 20, 25 years. And in the meantime? We need immigrants." She believes the government is ignoring the most obvious and easy remedy. "They just come out with demagogic phrases that don't reflect reality. Only with more migrants of working age will the population grow immediately and guarantee the pension payments of a rapidly ageing population. Angela Merkel had the same problem, understood it and welcomed a million Syrians."

A SHORT DRIVE from Maggiore is a smaller lake, Orta, with an island monastery. Opposite that island is Orta San Giulio, a stunning town with a medieval feel, thanks to its narrow alleys and ancient buildings. Orta made headlines in 2019 when, despite a population of 1,322, it registered no new births, and 29 deaths. Since then, the population has fallen by 160.

The independent mayor, Giorgio Angeleri, is a jovial man who is proud of his town. But he's aware that tourism is a mixed blessing, pushing up prices and pushing out cash-strapped youth. "Our challenge is to avoid Orta becoming a theme park," he says. Keeping schools open is a big part of that strategy: "We lay on free buses for pupils, free pre- and post-school activities." The town council pays for a proportion of school meals and finances 60% of the cost of summer camps. There's also a €500 bond given to all newborns.

Despite that, Angeleri ("unfortunately childless") is aware he's fighting a rearguard action. "There's an egotism to people now – they think primarily about themselves. They want to work, grow, travel, study, and the idea of getting married, let alone starting a family, doesn't come naturally." Unlike those who think poverty is the main factor that inhibits the birthrate, Angeleri believes affluence does, too: "The people here are very well-off. They haven't got economic problems and they don't want to complicate their lives by having a child."

Angeleri believes an ever-greater percentage of the Italian population is bound to be made up of foreigners. "It's inevitable. When I've run council tenders for cleaning contracts, all the companies employed only foreigners – South Americans, Albanians, Ukrainians. All the care workers looking after our elderly, everyone who works in agriculture – all the dairy farmers, fruit-pickers and butchers – they're all outsiders."

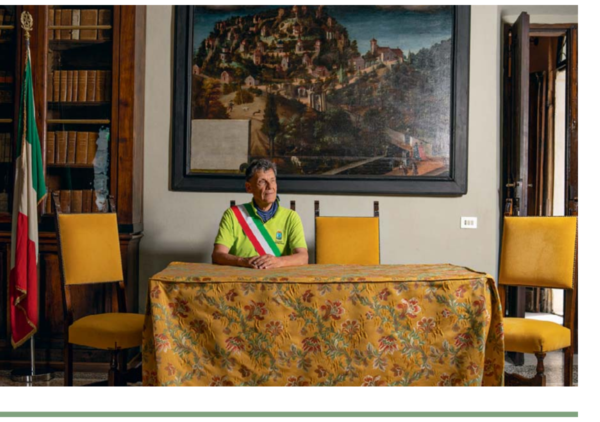
Having grown up in Peru (he moved to Italy as a teenager), he's unworried by this situation: "The world is round and hybridisation improves the human race," he says happily. "All this talk about ethnic substitution is just a distraction." But demographers are concerned that the sudden popularity of their subject may impede sensible, bipartisan policies. "Precisely because becoming a parent is a life-changing, long-term choice, it's crucial that policies are perceived as stable and not influenced by changes in government," Billari says. By turning the birthrate dilemma into a rightwing war cry, Saraceno says, the Meloni government "introduces an ideological charge to the issue".

"It almost makes me not want to have another child," says Silvana, a window-shopping mother whose one child is asleep in her pram. Describing herself as "leftwing", she says anyone with more than two children is seen now as ultra-Catholic or far-right. Immigrants, too, are sceptical of being used simply to plug a gap. Solomon, an elegant shop assistant who is originally from Ghana, guffaws lightheartedly when asked if there might be a warmer welcome for immigrants because of the population issue: "You know, if they allow us here just to pay old people's pensions, it's hardly a genuine welcome." Many of his friends, he says, are paid by their Italian employers in cash, so greater immigration would hardly resolve the crisis in the public finances anyway.

The challenge for Roccella and Meloni is to persuade Italians that the births emergency is an apolitical issue that affects the entire country. Perhaps only then will Italy's demographic winter turn into spring ●

Tobias Jones lives in Parma. His latest book, The Po: An Elegy for Italy's Longest River, is published by Bloomsbury at £12.99. Order it for £11.30 at guardianbookshop.com





'Our challenge is to avoid Orta San Giulio becoming a theme park,' says mayor Giorgio Angeleri (far right) of the town's rising tourists and dwindling residents

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'They have a group chat

Boys, friends, sexuality ... who better to give advice to teenage girls than teenage girls? *Zoe Williams* meets two young women whose hit blog is doing just that (thanks to Barbie)

MIA SUGIMOTO AND Sophia Rundle, both 17, met in their freshman year at high school in Washington State, four years ago. They had mutual interests, such as hanging out; they both really liked going to the beach. When they talk about it, I get a Technicolor flash of the intensity of teenage friendships: because it's not really about the beach, it's about what they *talked about* at the beach. Adult affiliations are so functional by comparison.

Barely two months ago, Sugimoto had an idea: to start Girlhood, an advice site where teenage girls helped other teenage girls with their dilemmas. "It came from the Barbie movie," she says. "I felt a feeling of comfort, a safe space around me full of girls, women from my age to their 80s, all crying."

Within three weeks, they had had 20,000 advice submissions, 8 million views, and 85,000 people had followed them on TikTok. "We've had over 6,000 people who want to volunteer," Sugimoto says, which is fortunate as they couldn't possibly do it all themselves. Indeed, they are both by necessity now mainly in operations, and the volunteer army does the wisdom.

They are not registered advice-givers, they stress. "We're not going to give advice on eating disorders, sexual assault, things like that," Rundle says. We don't want to harm our volunteers or the people we're giving advice to." Instead, the submissions are the elemental questions of becoming an adult: am I doing this right? Do I have enough friends, am I nice enough to them, are they nice enough to me? How do I get over this guy, or get him back, or get rid of him, or trust him? Am I achieving enough, or am I destined to be a failure?

Despite the international reach – they have had messages from Sweden, New Zealand and a number of Asian and African countries – the first volunteer inquiry was from the UK. "A lot of girls have issues that are very similar to ours," Sugimoto says. Rundle adds: "We both wanted to create a website that encompassed the spirit of big-sister advice: you can talk to us because we've had experiences similar to the ones you're going through."

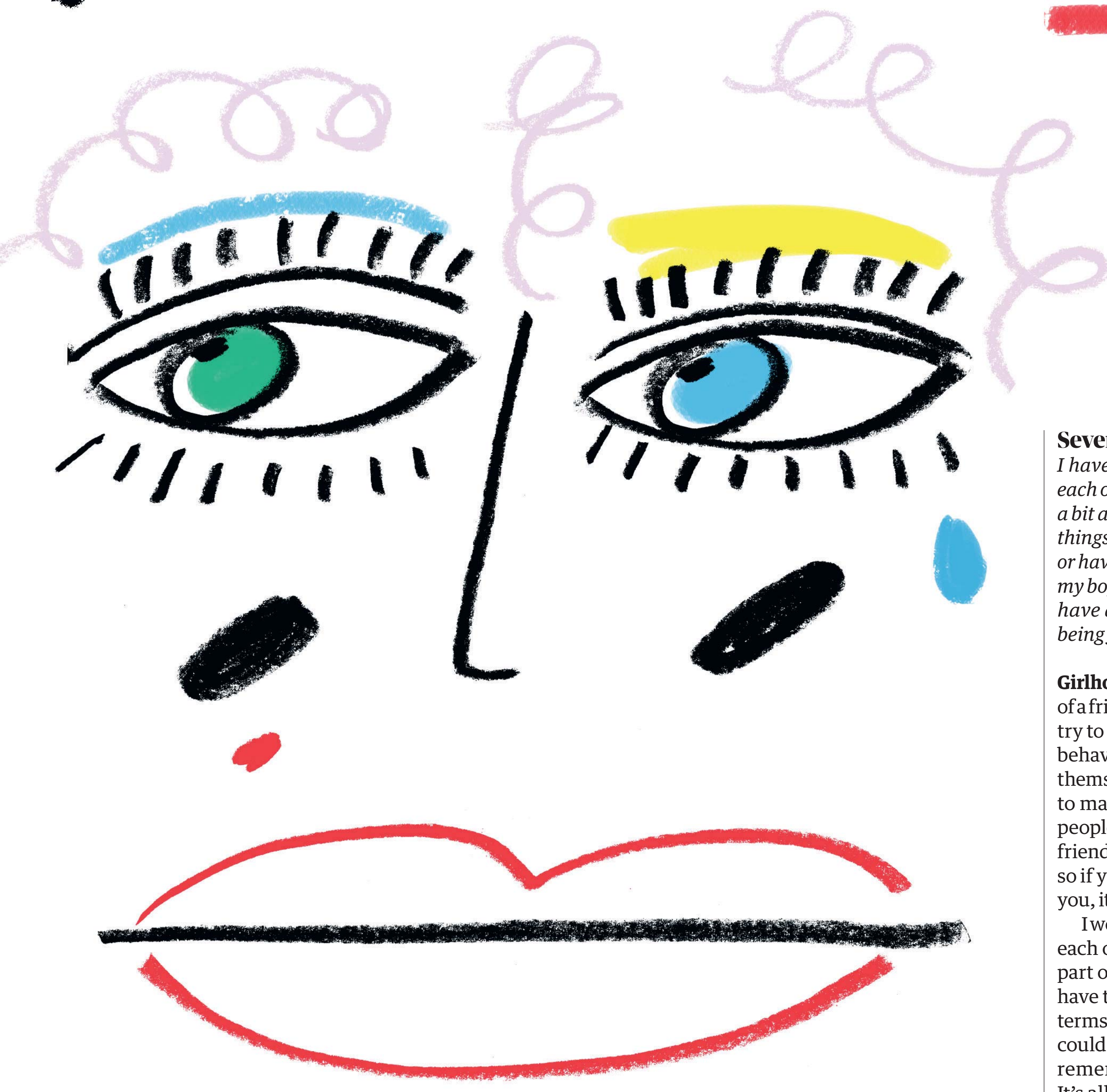
If there's anything dispiriting about reading the problems, it's how many of them speak to a power imbalance between girls and boys: a lot of heaviness about boys seemingly swimming in and out of relationships without a care in the world, while girls have tried everything to get over them, and are out of ideas. I thought gen Z had somehow reshuffled the deck on who held all the cards. Rundle and Sugimoto both shoot me a look of great patience, before Rundle explains: "We try not to get into the realm of activism, but the submissions are extremely telling about society. Women, psychologically, have a harder time getting over guys, that's what I've seen in Girlhood and in general." Their advice usually boils down to: "You'll get over him when you stop thinking about him." It emphatically doesn't go with: "Get fake eyelashes and flirt with his best friend".

Other problems a gen X could guess at but not remember: the mind-bending insecurities created by everyone else on social media looking so happy, all the goddam time. It creates all these anxieties; how come you only have three friends, when everyone else has 26? How are you ever going to get into a top university, when that person just hand-reared a panda? "Behind every photo and every post, there's a deeper meaning," Sugimoto says. "There's definitely a facade," Rundle adds. "For the most part, there would be so much more that is hidden: one person who really doesn't want to be there; an argument that broke out right after the smiling. People are constantly comparing themselves without knowing the reality of what they are comparing themselves with. Part of what Girlhood stands for is a corner of social media that isn't intoxicated by trying to be someone you aren't."

But there's something else that we, attendant adults, probably could remember if we made more effort. "Adults constantly hold this idea, 'We're so much more mature, smarter', but so many of them forget the visceral feelings that come up when people go through these challenges. It can be heart-shattering. So parents will give you their perspective, their advice, and it's super bland. If we had one message to tell to adults, if they want to understand the purpose of Girlhood, is that it's OK not to remember how you felt years and years ago." It's OK, that is, to be super bland: but don't be surprised when your teens get their wisdom elsewhere.

Illustrations: Rose Stallard





Seven problems solved by Girlhood

I have this group of friends – they are all a bit closer to each other than I am to any of them, but we still hang out a bit and talk at school. However, they always tend to do things after events we attend together and not invite me or have sleepovers. They say it's because I'm "always with my boyfriend" but they never ask or anything. They also have a separate group chat without me. Should I stop being friends with them?

Girlhood I totally understand what it's like to be left out of a friend group and then be met with excuses when you try to bring it up. First off, I want you to know that their behaviour has nothing to do with you! It's a reflection of themselves, and you shouldn't feel like you did anything to make them treat you this way. To be honest, these people don't really sound like your friends at all. A true friend group should make you feel loved and included, so if you don't feel like their friendship is doing that for you, it might be best to let it go.

I would take some time to evaluate how you feel about each of them. If you decide that you don't want to be a part of the group any more, that doesn't mean that you have to cut all of them off. Maybe you could stay on OK terms with them, or maybe just a one-on-one friendship could work out better with someone in the group. Just remember that you don't owe anyone anything. It's all up to you and whether or not these friendships make you feel good.

‘My best friend got a boyfriend’

*OK, so my best friend recently got a boyfriend and they have been dating for about a month. I’m glad that she has found someone and is happy, it’s just she has been ditching me a lot lately and lying about it. We make plans together and I get excited, but then she cancels last minute and says stuff like, “My mom wants me home to do chores”, but then I see that they are hanging out together. I always know because she posts stuff of them hanging. I feel that she wants me to see it to make me jealous or something. There are so many more times when things like that have happened and it honestly just makes me sad because she’s one of my only friends. I also just kind of think it’s stupid because they haven’t been together for that long and it’s literally a high-school relationship. Also, I know they are going to break up officially soon because they already fight and have taken “breaks” (for like one day). I don’t know if I should stick by her and comfort her when it happens or just focus on myself and, hopefully, she will realise that she was kind of a b*tch to me and regrets how she treated me.*

Girlhood I’ve had experiences of my own that are similar to yours. It hurts, especially when your parents ask if your friends are coming over, or when you can feel your friendship drifting apart. It’s normal to lose time with your friends when they get a significant other, but, either way, she shouldn’t be lying about it.

I would communicate to her about how you’re feeling. It doesn’t have to be a big, formal type of thing – you can just shoot her a text. A possible example is confronting her about the situation in a nice manner, and asking if you did anything for her to be acting that way. Especially about lying and posting on social media for you to see. You never know, she could be going through something herself.

If they do eventually break up, it is best for you to stay by her side. If anything, that’ll make her realise how mean her actions were by setting an example of how to be a good friend.

‘Should I go for my friend’s ex?’

I’m 16 and since about eighth grade there’s been this boy – we instantly connected and were obsessed with each other for the next year or so. He lost feelings and moved on, but my feelings haven’t stopped. We’re in the same friend group, and back in March he started talking to my friend and they started dating. A couple of weeks ago they broke up because he cheated on her. I saw that as an opportunity to go for him again, but she’s one of my best friends and I don’t think I could do that to her – but I had him first, so would I be the asshole??

Girlhood I get where you are coming from. It’s hard to see a boy you’ve liked since eighth grade date one of your best friends. I get that your feelings for him are strong, but right now you must balance the pros and cons. Try to put yourself in your friend’s shoes. It would be hard to go through heartbreak (get cheated on), and then see your good friend go for your ex. If you want to go for him, wait it out before doing so. Make sure your friend is doing OK, and before you do anything get her approval. If you go straight into it, the drama will stir and be a mess.

That being said, we also need to think about his morals/personality. Would you be willing to be with someone who cheated before? Try to look out for yourself – self-care is important, love! Whatever happens, just know that, at the end of the day, everything will be all right.

‘Over these past few months, I think I’ve fallen for her’ ♡

OK, so I’m 17 and I’ve known I’m bi for a while now. Over the past year, I’ve started telling my friends about my experiences with girls and they have all been supportive. One of my friends in particular has seemed extra-interested and even flirty with me ever since she found out. I didn’t really think much of it, but, over the past few months, I think I’ve fallen for her. As far as I know, she’s completely straight. She always jokes around about kissing me or calling me hot, but I don’t know if she actually means anything more by this. She doesn’t act this way toward her other friends. We have been friends for so many years and I don’t want to ruin anything by mentioning it, but, at the same time, I don’t wanna miss out by staying quiet. I’m kind of conflicted because it also hurts whenever she gets excited and talks to me about boys.

Girlhood So I’m bi myself and I’m more than well aware of the stereotypes that come with liking women. When people find out, they can sometimes get weird and treat you differently. If your friend is actually straight and is flirty with you because she knows you like women, I hope you know that means she’s not a very good friend. Taking advantage of someone’s sexuality for something like an ego boost is awful, and I genuinely hope that is not the case. The fact she doesn’t act like that around her other friends could mean one of two things: she is attracted to you and only started doing this because you being bi means she’s in the clear to actually like you *or* she wants you to be attracted to her because she thinks it’s fun.

I think the best thing to do to see what your next steps should be is to confront her. Not in the abrasive sense, but by asking her about her sexuality. Some people don’t like to be prodded, but I would be straightforward and honest with her. Tell her that you can’t tell if she’s actually flirting with you or not, and if she doesn’t mean it, she should stop because it makes you uncomfortable. Tell her that if she’s straight, it feels like she’s taking advantage of your sexuality by flirting and essentially leading you on. This does imply that you like her, but you can always play it off.

If you have this conversation and find out she’s straight and has been playing with you, you can choose to keep her as a friend and hopefully educate her on why what she did wasn’t right. If she is queer and she still acts the same, she could very well like you and I’d say go for it! If you like her and you have a chance, you should do what makes you happy.



'I'm 19 and never been in a relationship'

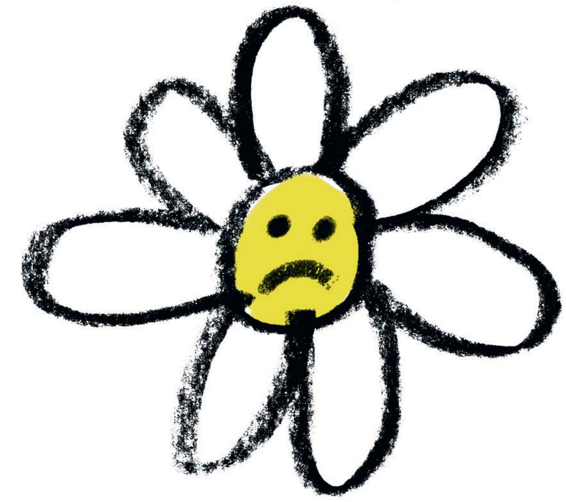
I'm 19 and I've never been in a relationship. I've never had any contact with a boy or kissed or held hands or ANYTHING. I feel so behind and pathetic. It doesn't bother me too much, but whenever I'm with my friends, who have had sex and been in relationships, I can't help but wonder if maybe I'm just not pretty/good enough. No boy has ever approached me or asked me out, which doesn't help my self-esteem much. I know I shouldn't feel like I need a man's attention but when every girl I'm surrounded by has been on dates/asked out etc, it really makes me wonder why I haven't had any of that happen to me. I'm very shy and quiet, and I struggle with social anxiety. I just need tips on how to talk to men. I get nervous around them and it's a struggle, considering all my lab partners are boys this semester. I freeze up and I get embarrassed (my face turns red) since I can't talk to them the way that I do with the girlies. How do I start a conversation? Anything helps <3 !

Girlhood Don't worry if you feel like you're falling behind in love (like the song by Laufey!). Nothing is wrong with you, there are tons of girls in similar situations, and you are not pathetic.

I have a friend who is drop-dead gorgeous, and everywhere I went, boys would come up to us and ask for her Snapchat. All of my guy friends have had a crush on her at some point, and she is genuinely a great girl to be around. Even though I wanted to hype her up and support her, too, I couldn't help but feel insecure about my own looks because I felt like no boys paid attention to me.

Every girl is beautiful, and the situation you are in is universal. If you're comfortable enough to make a move on boys, try to seem as confident as you can. Fake it until you make it!

Just know that you are beautiful inside and out, and that there is someone in this world who is perfect for you. Please don't do anything you aren't comfortable with just because everyone else is doing it.



'How do I become OK with not having a lot of friends?'

I feel like everywhere I look – both on social media and in real life – every girl has so many friends. They're constantly out posting photos and videos, or talking about memories they've had recently at parties or hangouts that I couldn't even dream of being invited to. I have maybe four friends, and I love them to death, but sometimes I find myself longing to have the huge friend groups that all of the other girls seem to have. How do I become OK with not having that?

Girlhood I feel like this isn't talked about enough, so I'm really glad you asked this. As somebody who has gone through my high-school years phasing in and out of multiple friend groups – both big and small – I want to start off by telling you that having a big friend group is almost never as glorious as it appears on social media (almost nothing is lol.)

People in general (especially high-schoolers) tend to idolise big friend groups because they seem great in theory: lots of people that "like you", always something to do, more opportunities for exciting activities, etc. In actuality, this isn't really the case. I've noticed that during the periods of my life when I've been involved in big friend groups, I felt the most alone, and, according to the other girls I've spoken with about this topic, they feel similarly.

Big friend groups breed so much drama and don't foster true connections with the people around you (most of the time, not all of the time). I assure you that 99% of the girls you see on social media or around you boasting about how many friends they have, or all the "cool" things they're doing, are putting on a facade (at least to an extent).

It's sort of the same principle as "you don't know what the people around you are dealing with". There is so much hidden drama and resentment that goes on behind the scenes in groups like this, and, in my experience, only having a few close friends I love, can rely on, and don't feel like I'm sacrificing my own peace for, is so much more beneficial for my mental health.

I have maybe five really good friends, and have never been happier with the people in my life! Don't feel bad or compare yourself with other girls who seem like they have more friends because, honestly, they're probably looking at you with the same envy.

'I feel like I haven't achieved enough'

This isn't necessarily a girl-related issue, but it's just been something I've been struggling with recently as a girl who has just graduated high school. I want to be somebody and I want to do something with my life. I have this weird feeling of worthlessness because I haven't achieved much or "lived my life to the fullest", as people say.

Girlhood I'm so glad you asked this because it strays into philosophy, which is something that I am super-passionate about. I think that you need to ask yourself a quick question: "What do I deem as an achievement? What do I deem as success or 'living life to the fullest'? What is my idea of this?"

People tend to trap themselves in a state of perpetual worry (a sort of existential dread) and will not take a moment to pause, look around and revel in the small things. I am so guilty of doing this, but this is how I think about it: I feel like I can't ever stop wasting time. I want to do something with my life: I want to be everything, achieve all I can achieve, and make my mark on the world in a way that is transferable and will live on longer than my body does, but, instead, I spend my time going to sleep, reading books, singing in my car on drives back from school, or hanging out with my friends. I take my dog for walks, I swim in oceans and rivers and lakes, or dance with the people I love. But then I think, maybe this is what it's really all about.

I came to this revelation at 1am with a group of my friends. We were at one of their houses, and he lives out in the middle of nowhere, so – kind of a spur-of-the-moment decision – we suddenly got up and started sprinting out into the woods. We were running and jumping and screaming until our lungs stung and then we lay out in the middle of the road on the other side of the forest where a car hadn't driven by in days and just lay there looking up into endless darkness.

I wasn't doing anything that one might deem a "success" or an "achievement" or even "living my life to the fullest". I was simply being a human, and that was enough. You don't need to be anyone. You don't need to "achieve" anything (whatever the hell that means). You can just be, and that's what it's truly all about ●

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DO YOU TRUST THIS MAN TO SAVE THE WORLD?

When Cop28 starts next month, Sultan Al Jaber will be front and centre. He is the United Arab Emirates' choice to head up the climate talks – and he also happens to be head of the national oil company. What's the problem with that, he asks Fiona Harvey



Portrait: Benedict Evans

EXPO CITY, NEAR DUBAI, rears out of the desert like a housing estate designed by Disney in a fever dream. Built for the Expo 2020 global fair, identikit skyscrapers surround a vast dome, with a sprinkling of giant steel-and-silicon mushrooms stretching towards the blinding sun. There is a forest of glass needles, a "surreal water feature" like a mini Niagara Falls in black marble, a giant metal falcon and sculptures of running horses. The effect is both beautiful and bewildering.

It's here, amid the imported palm trees and concrete flowers, that the most important meeting yet on the future of the global climate will soon take place. Cop28 will gather the heads of state and government from a potential 196 countries to draw up an escape plan for a world on fire. Global heating has been increasing in severity for years, but this summer there were impacts no one could ignore. Temperatures in July were the highest they had been for 120,000 years. New Yorkers choked on smoke from Canadian wildfires, tourists fled Greek islands, workers suffered heatstroke in India and Hawaii blazed. As land temperatures broke records, the seas reached hot-tub heat around Atlantic coasts, killing fish and bleaching coral, in a marine heatwave of unprecedented intensity. Antarctic ice is failing to re-form and there are signs that part of the Gulf Stream system may be weakening. Scientists warn we have entered "uncharted territory" for the climate, and people around the world can see the results with their own eyes. "The era of global boiling," as the UN secretary general put it, "has arrived."

And yet, despite more than 30 years of intensifying climate talks, last year the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions reached record levels. We are still hurtling in the wrong direction.

If the surroundings of Dubai's Expo City appear surreal, the circumstances of the conference stretch credulity. Dubai, like the rest of the United Arab Emirates, is built almost entirely on fossil fuel wealth. UAE is the world's seventh biggest oil producer with the fifth largest gas reserves. And the man UAE has chosen to preside over Cop28, charged with changing the world's course before it is too late, is the chief of the country's national oil company, Adnoc. Sultan Al Jaber, who is also UAE's minister for advanced technology, is the most important person on the planet right now, as far as the climate crisis is concerned, and he rarely gives interviews. Most of his public appearances in his Cop role have been tightly scripted affairs, long on aspiration but short on substance, taking no questions and repeating the same few messages: "Climate change is the common enemy, we must unite to fight it."

Campaigners have been scathing. Greta Thunberg called it "completely ridiculous" for Al Jaber to take the role. A fellow youth climate justice organiser, Eric Njuguna from Kenya, called it "a stab in the back for poor countries to have a fossil fuel CEO on top of efforts to constrain the climate crisis". Campaign groups around the world called for Al Jaber at least to resign his Adnoc post during his Cop presidency.

I have come to UAE to meet Al Jaber and his close-knit Cop team, to see the preparations and try to discover for myself whether the criticisms are justified. Unpromising though it seems, there is a bizarre logic to his role. If fossil fuels are at the heart of the problem, then perhaps a man at the heart of the fossil fuel industry is uniquely equipped to break the global impasse.

I interviewed him at length on three occasions, twice in London, once in Abu Dhabi, and observed him at other meetings, including at Buckingham Palace, where he met the king. Some were on the record and some – frustratingly – not, which the Guardian reluctantly accepted, given the delicate nature of Cop negotiations. On these visits, I also met most of the senior members of Al Jaber's team, about 20 of those working on Cop28, as well as speaking to whistleblowers who have left and to diplomats from more than 30 countries, developed and developing, who will attend Cop28.

Over lunch in Abu Dhabi, and Arabic coffee in the UAE embassy in Belgravia, London, Al Jaber (known as Dr Sultan to his team) gives every appearance of relishing confrontation. On our first meeting, in London, he strides ahead of his aides to whirl me through a succession of well-appointed embassy parlours before deeming one suitable. "Is this to your liking?" he asks, jokingly. "No, this one isn't good enough." Something over 1.9 metres (6ft 3in) with a dark, carefully trimmed beard, he towers over me and his staff, talking rapidly and with emphasis, cocking an eyebrow to make sure I'm keeping up.

Does he know many people were sceptical of his presidency? He makes a wide gesture, to indicate his openness to criticism. "I am here promoting inclusivity for Cop28, I want everyone to be heard," he says. "So I travelled the world and met even with those who attack me publicly. I made it a point to see them – 'Guys, I'm here. Tell me. Help me. Guide me. I am here to listen.' I am not saying or claiming that I have all the solutions. The best feedback and advice I got was the uncensored feedback that I received from NGOs and civil society."

Did they tell him to resign? "I stood my ground, when I thought, OK, I know what I'm talking about." Can he understand why people might question the idea of a fossil fuel executive in charge of climate talks? He smiles at me, eyes wide behind large, expensive-looking glasses. "Never in history has a Cop president confronted the oil industry, let alone the fact that he's a CEO of an oil company," he tells me. "Not having oil and gas and high-emitting industries on the same table is not the right thing to do. You need to bring them all. We need to reimagine this relationship between producers and consumers. We need this integrated approach."

But the world needs to get away from fossil fuels, and Adnoc is planning a massive expansion, as the Guardian revealed earlier this year. "We might use it for helping bridge the gap in the market. Investing in our reserves here, it's investing in our economy." Plus, Al Jaber is eager to tell me, Adnoc's fuel is lower in carbon than oil and gas from other sources. That is because UAE has invested heavily in modernising its drilling and refining operations, plugging leaks and upgrading equipment. That should make Adnoc's products the preferred option, he insists, while we still need oil and gas. He seems aggrieved that Adnoc's efforts are not recognised. (There are also doubts among some industry experts over the extent of the carbon savings claimed.)

But oil and gas that has been efficiently extracted is still oil and gas, therefore adding to carbon overload in the planet's atmosphere, I note. He quotes the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which found that a small quantity of oil and gas could still be used in 2050, when the world must reach net zero. With that in mind, he says, "We should allow for the least carbon-intensive fossil fuel to be part of the mix. Whether we like it or not, the world will continue to need this source of energy."

Temperatures this year may have already topped 1.5C above pre-industrial levels – the totemic limit set out in the 2015 Paris agreement, beyond which climate chaos will ensue. The fossil fuel juggernaut shows no sign of stopping, and last year its profits globally were an estimated $4tn (£3.28tn). Will we stay within 1.5C?

"I'm not in a position to answer that, honestly speaking. I would be misleading you. What I'm saying is that I and the next [Cop] president and the one after him should stay laser focused and give it our best possible shot. Because that's the deciding factor, and we must stay on top of it. Anything we do, under the sun, on this planet, should be towards achieving that target."

This is not exactly reassuring, from the man charged with leading the planet to safety. "My focus is to phase out emissions from everything. Regardless of where it comes from."

At times, Al Jaber – who is courteous and cheerful under my questioning, beaming and friendly but never uncomfortably so, making little jokes about the food, the coffee, my shorthand, inviting me to visit his home in Abu Dhabi after Cop finishes – seems puzzled that the world is not more delighted at UAE's taking on this role. He is concerned people have not recognised the country's desire to make a change. Take Adnoc's extra production. "There is a complete misunderstanding. We are not expanding production, we are expanding capacity. All we're doing is adding another 600,000 barrels of capacity, which can be produced only if and when the market needs it." If that capacity turns out not to be needed for fuel, he suggests, hydrocarbons could be turned instead to plastics. He gestures to the carpet, the curtains, his white dishdasha robe. "This is made from oil, that is made from oil – everything around us is made from this finite resource. We have to accept that."

You can't ask me to believe that UAE's high-grade hydrocarbons will be made into textiles, I tell him. But he's off again, talking about low-carbon solutions, massive investments in renewables, in hydrogen, in carbon capture and storage. Consumers need to shift their habits, too, he points out. "It's the consumer who contributes to increasing CO_2 emissions, not the producer." I point out that this is the logic of a drug dealer. Al Jaber brushes this off with a gesture. "What I'm calling for is a new model of engagement. I want it to be more of a creative partnership between producers and consumers, rather than it being what it is today."

Repeatedly, I ask Al Jaber about the phase down and phase out of fossil fuels required to reach net zero, and the attempts by more than 80 countries to push Cop into agreeing a phase-out. Repeatedly, his answers suggest he believes that fossil fuel extraction can continue, even while the climate crisis unfolds.

At what point will we have phased out fossil fuels? "You and I and no one on Earth knows the answer to this question. It all depends on whether we get the world to unite on a very serious accelerated programme of decarbonisation across the board."

Al Jaber has an answer for every question, delivered with rapid-fire enthusiasm, thick with detail, facts and figures. He's constantly in motion, leaping up from the table to the window, to point out his electric car outside; leaning forward over the coffee table, jabbing the air for emphasis. His aides nearly have to run to keep up as he leads us down the corridor to lunch, the skirts of his dishdasha swirling about him. (I'm surprised to find, when I check his age, that he's nearly as old as me, having celebrated his 50th birthday in August. I had taken him for much younger, and remarkably young for the head of a major oil company.)

There's only one point when he's nonplussed. Does he intend to put Adnoc out of business? He stops still and turns to stare at me in astonishment. "Why would I want to do that?" Because that's the logic of fixing the climate crisis. Fossil fuel companies will have to stop producing oil and gas. He shakes his head in disbelief. "We are a very progressive, advanced energy company,"

'HE'S THE ONLY ONE WE'VE GOT, WE NEED TO WORK WITH HIM, TO PREVENT HIM BEING UNDERMINED'

he tells me, as if I have failed to understand. "We've transformed, we've decarbonised, and this came at a cost, but we did it because of our commitment to transformation and decarbonisation, ensuring that Adnoc is fit for the future."

Everything Al Jaber says is true. But the problem is it only goes so far. Yes, the IPCC has found that the world will still need some fossil fuels, even when reaching net zero. But the amount needed will be tiny, much smaller than the world's current production.

Yes, fossil fuels that are more efficiently extracted *are* better for the planet than those carelessly extracted with large leaks of methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide. But that ignores the fact that they're still fossil fuels, and burning them at the rate we are doing will kill the planet.

Yes, scientists agree that some carbon capture and storage facilities will be needed, along with technology to draw down carbon from the air. But these will be relatively small in scale and chiefly to deal with the emissions that are hardest to get rid of, from industries such as cement-making. All the scientists I speak to, from the chiefs of the IPCC down, are clear that it is neither technically nor economically feasible to use these technologies at a large scale to remove the emissions of the fossil fuel industry and give it a continued licence to operate.

Al Jaber's fluent rhetoric serves to obscure a single obdurate fact: the world cannot go on with a burgeoning fossil fuel industry. Oil and gas companies, and the petro-states they prop up, must refocus themselves on renewable energy, or go out of business. Or we will fry.

JUST A FEW MILES FROM the techno-architectural wonders of Expo City stands a remarkable structure. Here, too, it's as if an alien civilisation has colonised a swathe of the desert: row upon geometric row of shining black sheets, set a few feet above the sand, as far as the eye can see. The managers who show me round point out how the panels tilt slowly to follow the sun, and are periodically dusted by a phalanx of robots.

This is one of the world's largest solar farms, owned by the UAE government-backed renewables company Masdar, and it is where Al Jaber started his career. Born in 1973 in the smaller emirate of Umm Al Quwain, without royal connections, and not from one of the major merchant families, Al Jaber studied engineering at the University of Southern California, then Coventry University. Before he was chosen to head up Adnoc in 2016, he was invited to be co-founder of Masdar in 2006. Photos from the time show Al Jaber cutting a much bigger figure – a close associate tells me he has lost a considerable amount of weight, and when we lunch he eats sparingly, mainly salad, fruit and yoghurt.

Al Jaber sees his background at Masdar as key to his role at Cop28. One of the main pledges he is trying to extract from governments at the conference is for the world to triple its renewable energy capacity. This is one of the few areas of climate action that give a reason to be cheerful. Prices for solar panels have plunged in the past two decades, though there are still concerns over the future supply of some components, and the number of installations is rising far beyond predictions.

It was a surprise when, in 2016, Al Jaber was plucked from Masdar to head up Adnoc. "I wasn't the obvious choice," he tells me. "The reason [the president of UAE] selected me is simply because he wanted disruption. I was sent to transform Adnoc, to decarbonise Adnoc and to future-proof Adnoc. I was not sent to Adnoc to maintain business as usual."

People familiar with the top echelons of UAE society tell me it is unusual for someone from a relatively obscure background to be chosen to head up anything major by the government, let alone such high-profile gigs as the national oil company, the country's single most important business. While the country is diverse – with 9 million foreign-born expats and about 1 million citizens, who encompass "everything from the ultra-conservative to people who are wokey-pronouny", one local tells me – the upper class tends to be tight-knit.



Devastation in Hawaii, where wildfires this summer displaced thousands and killed more than 100 people

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Al Jaber benefited from an early friendship with Khaldoon al-Mubarak, who is thought to have been a major influence in landing Al Jaber his roles in Masdar, Adnoc and Cop28. Al Mubarak was the son of UAE's ambassador to France, who was assassinated in Paris in 1984, when his son was eight. The boy was taken under the wing of the royal family, and now chairs Manchester City football club and is chief executive of the sovereign wealth fund, Mubadala Investment Company.

More than one person who has worked with Al Jaber (I spoke to several who have left) report that he can be tempestuous, scathing and intimidating. Midnight, early morning and weekend phone calls are common, with unstinting demands for work to be delivered instantly. Al Jaber's own team say he is simply committed. He admits to being passionate, and if the team are working all hours, this is unsurprising given what's hanging on the summit.

UAE's Cop28 team has also gone through some turmoil. Several PR companies auditioned for contracts, but none were chosen. At least three senior appointments of outside experts fell through. David Canzini, a pugnacious former adviser to Boris Johnson who advocated for more oil and gas in the UK, joined in May. One former team member told me Tony Blair was closely consulted on all Al Jaber's major Cop28 announcements, though Blair's institute and the UAE say that is not the case. The launch has been mired in controversy: the Guardian revealed Adnoc shared an email server with the Cop28 team, and many apparently fake social media accounts applauded the country's hosting of it. Cop28 spokespeople told the Guardian the servers had been separated, and the fake accounts were "generated by outside actors unconnected to Cop28" and were "clearly designed to discredit Cop28 and the climate process".

Two former insiders tell me Al Jaber wants to hold on to his Adnoc job to ensure there can be no boardroom coup while he concentrates on Cop28, although another well-placed Dubai observer says it is unlikely he would lose his job if Cop28 turned out badly. Within such a tight ruling clique, looking over one's shoulder is the only sensible position. UAE has strong ties to neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil producer, which has a long history of trying to wreck global climate agreements. Diplomats from other countries involved in Cop28 speculate that Al Jaber's pronouncements are vetted or subject to scrutiny by Saudi interests. A close aide rejects this and characterises the Saudi relationship as being "like brothers", where familial disagreements and rivalries are common.

More than once in our interviews, Al Jaber makes some strong statements on Cop that would be headline-grabbing. But these are in off-the-record segments and on reflection they are toned down by his office.

Several of the diplomats I speak to express private reservations about Al Jaber and UAE's Cop presidency. None want to go public because they need to encourage him to face down the wreckers to produce a strong outcome in Dubai this December. "He's the only one we've got, we need to work with him, to prevent him being undermined at home, or by Saudi," says one, expressing a common view.

Holding the climate summit in an oil-rich state was always going to be a gamble. Oil industry executives poured into Cop27, last year in Egypt, and the outcome was far from what campaigners had hoped, as countries tried to unpick previous commitments to the 1.5C goal. Al Jaber argues that, as a businessman, he is best placed to swing the oil industry, and he may be right. But it's far from clear that his plans are ambitious enough. He points to a promise made by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, then crown prince of UAE, now president, in 2015. "In 50 years, when we might have the last barrel of oil, the question is: when it is shipped abroad, will we be sad?" Bin Zayed asked. "If we are investing today in the right sectors, I can tell you we will celebrate at that moment."

Fifty years, according to scientists, will be decades too long to wait for decisive action. The world must halve greenhouse gas emissions within this decade to prevent temperatures rising more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, from about 1.2C today, and must reach net zero emissions by 2050.

As I leave Expo City Dubai, a handful of visitors are watching their children splashing at the foot of the massive artificial waterfall, giggling under the cascades, a welcome respite from the burning heat. I try the same, hobbling across almost unbearably scorching pebbles to paddle in the cooling stream. It's a shame we are not here in the evening, my guides tell me. At night there is a spectacular light show in which carefully concealed spotlights are manipulated, to give the miraculous impression that the water is flowing uphill ●



Joyce DiDonato and Ryan McKinny star in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.
PHOTO: PAOLA KUDACKI/MET OPERA

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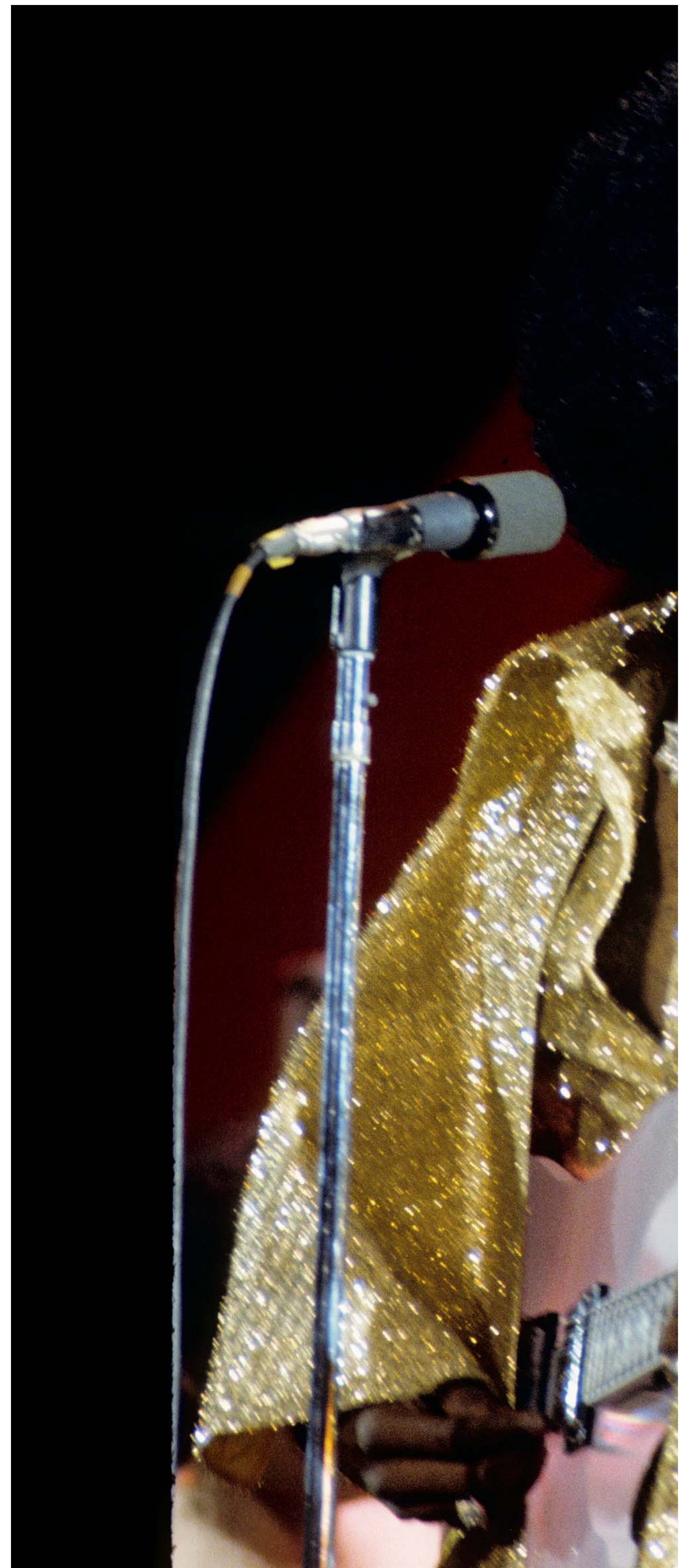
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THE FUNK AND THE FURY

From winning over Woodstock to trips with George Clinton, Sly Stone's wild, uncensored life in his own words





The kinetic, psychedelic music of Sly and the Family Stone built a bridge between the funk of James Brown, the freakouts of Parliament-Funkadelic and the wild experimentation of Prince. But Sly Stone also lived a life as vivid and unstable as the music his band made. These extracts from his long-awaited memoir depict the highs of Woodstock, the lows of drug addiction and the remarkable life lived in between

THEY SENT AN ARMY helicopter to take me to Woodstock, or at least an army-style helicopter. As I flew in I couldn't see the whole crowd, but you could see enough people dotting the landscape that it was hard to believe that there were even more. "Goddamn". I said to myself. "Goddamn. What the fuck is this?" So many people, an ocean of them without any land for miles. When something is that big a deal, be sure you're ready.

That was still my thought on stage. Did I feel the moment as pressure? I knew we had to live up to it, not to mention rise to the level of the other artists. Janis Joplin was on before us, and then there was a break, and it was like the sky split open with rain. More than one of us was afraid to touch the equipment because of the danger of getting shocked.

We went on around 3:30 in the morning and opened with M'Lady, with its big vocal breakdown at the end and the band storming back in to finish it while the weather did the same all around us. We rolled into the guitar-and-organ intro to Sing a Simple Song, and rolled through You Can Make It If You Try. We were leaving a record behind in the air, in the minds of the people who were there. Next we played Everyday People. We were building to I Want to Take You Higher. By now it was past four in the morning, still dark, but I could see more of the crowd in the predawn light. Goddamn.

I was thinking what would happen if I said something and they all said it back. What would that sound like? So I tried it. I took the microphone and spoke to everyone.

"What we would like to do is sing a song together. And you see what usually happens is you got a group of people that might sing and for some reasons that are not unknown any more, they won't do it. Most of us need to get approval from our neighbours before we can actually let it all hang down. But what is happening here is we're going to try to do a singalong. Now a lot of people don't like to do it. Because they feel that it might be old-fashioned. But you must dig that it is not a fashion in the first place. It is a feeling. And if it was good in the past, it's still good."



Family guy Stone plays in Harlem in 1969, as featured in the film Summer of Soul

I sang, "I want to take you higher", and they sang back the last word, "higher". All of them. Damn. We kept it going. I kept it going.

"Just say 'higher' and throw the peace sign up. It'll do you no harm. Still again, some people feel that they shouldn't because there are situations where you need approval to get in on something that could do you some good."

Higher went out. Higher came back. What the word meant widened. It wasn't just keeping yourself up with a good mood or good drugs. It was defeating anything that could bring you down.

"If you throw the peace sign up and say 'higher', you get everybody to do it. There's a whole lot of people here and a whole lot of people that might not want to do it, because if they can somehow get around it, they feel there are enough people to make up for it. We're going to try 'higher' again, and if we can get everybody to join in, we'd appreciate it. It'll do you no harm."

A wave crashing on to the shore of the stage. Way up on the hill …

"Want to take you higher!" / "Higher!"
"Want to take you higher!" / "Higher!"
"Want to take you higher!" / "Higher!"

The call, the response. It felt like church. By then the film crew was fully in place. The horns went up into the sky. When the show was over, we were wet and cold. I don't remember how I left, maybe the same way I came in, but I wasn't there to see Jimi close the festival.

By the next day it was clear that Woodstock had been a big deal, and that we had been a major part of that deal. The festival had put a spotlight on lots of groups, but us and Jimi the most. What really made it clear to me was when my manager David Kapralik gave me a Stellavox tape recorder, one of the best in the world. This is a nice motherfucker, I thought. Why would you give that to me? And then I answered myself: Because I kicked ass.

****

"Sly! Sly! Sly!" I turned around at the third one. I was in New York for a party at someone's apartment, and George Clinton was there too. I hadn't seen George for a little while. Since we had toured, Parliament had put

ABC ARCHIVES/DISNEY GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT/GETTY; ALBUM/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; AMANDA EDWARDS/GETTY; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY





Soul survivors Stone with fellow funk pioneer George Clinton in 2009; and (top) Stone live in 1975

With George Clinton, we went fishing, made music and got high – not always in that order



Top of the jocks Stone behind the mic in 1967, during his time as a DJ on San Francisco's KSOL

out some bigger albums, and then Funkadelic had, and George had started a thousand offshoot bands, too. But he was starting to burn out from juggling it all: acts, labels, tours, money, drugs.

We talked for a long time at that party. He told me that he was heading up to his farm in Michigan, and that I could visit anytime. "Maybe I will," I said. I did. Country living was clean air and a lack of distraction. We went fishing, made music, and got high, not always in that order.

George was a trip. I always thought of him as a human cartoon. If there was a way to make an experience more fun, he would find it. He was funny on his own, and together we were even funnier. If I wanted money to score I didn't have to lie and say that I was buying equipment or giving a girlfriend money for clothes. I would just come right out and ask: "Can I star?" But in this case, the headliner got attention first.

Even though George and I used together, we didn't use in similar ways. He would go to sleep earlier and I would stay up later. He would stop and I was just getting started. Sometimes after he was in bed, I needed more drugs. I would write dope notes and slide them under his door. There was one he liked to bring up: "Knock knock. Put a rock in a sock and send it over to me, doc. Signed, a co-junkie for the funk." By now the drugs were in rock form, made with baking soda and called crack because of the crackling noise it made when it was heated up.

We met a dealer who knew every song from every Family Stone record. We had to wait for the drugs while he asked detailed questions. Was it a harmonium on that song? What was the gear we used for the other one? One afternoon on the way over there George and I realised that we didn't have money for dope. When we got there I didn't wait for the dealer to start talking about my music. I went in on it myself.

And then I hit him with a bonus. "We're light," I said, "but I'll give you a copy of the album I'm working on as collateral. You can't listen to it, but you can keep it safe for me." I went out to the car and came back with a tape. I think his hand was shaking when he gave us the drugs, he was so excited.

On our way home, George congratulated me on thinking fast. "Good idea to give him a copy of the record."

"What record?" I said.

He was staring at me like I forgot something that had just happened.

"You know," he said. "The tape. The music."

"There's no music on there," I said. "There's nothing. It's empty."

I don't know how long George laughed, but it seemed like it was the whole ride home. He eventually told the dealer, who wasn't even mad. "You have to respect that," the dealer said.

****

I decided to get clean on the fourth visit to hospital in 2019. The first time, I was feeling bad at home, faint and weak, having trouble breathing, so I called Arlene, who was my girlfriend back in the 80s and is now my friend and manager. I called her and she called the ambulance. I was in and out of the hospital before anyone could get comfortable with the idea of me being there. I only wanted to get home and keep doing what I was doing, which included drugs.

The second time, the doctor said, "If you go home and smoke again, you could die." I heard him but I didn't believe him. I went home and smoked again.

The third time was a terrible scene. I was exhausted that time and weakened, and the hospital wanted to keep me longer so I could get some rest and some tests. I wanted out. I wanted home.

Arlene may not have agreed, but she understood that I had made up my mind. To be let go I had to sign a release saying that I took full responsibility. When they let me go, I didn't even get a wheelchair. I got on my feet, barely. I got into the hall, barely. I started to walk, barely. That corridor went on farther than I could imagine. It took more than an hour to make it from the room to the car.

The fourth time came just two weeks later. That time, I not only listened to the doctor but believed him. I realised I needed to clean up. I concentrated on getting strong so that I could get clean. My kids visited me at the hospital. My grandkids visited me. I left with purpose.

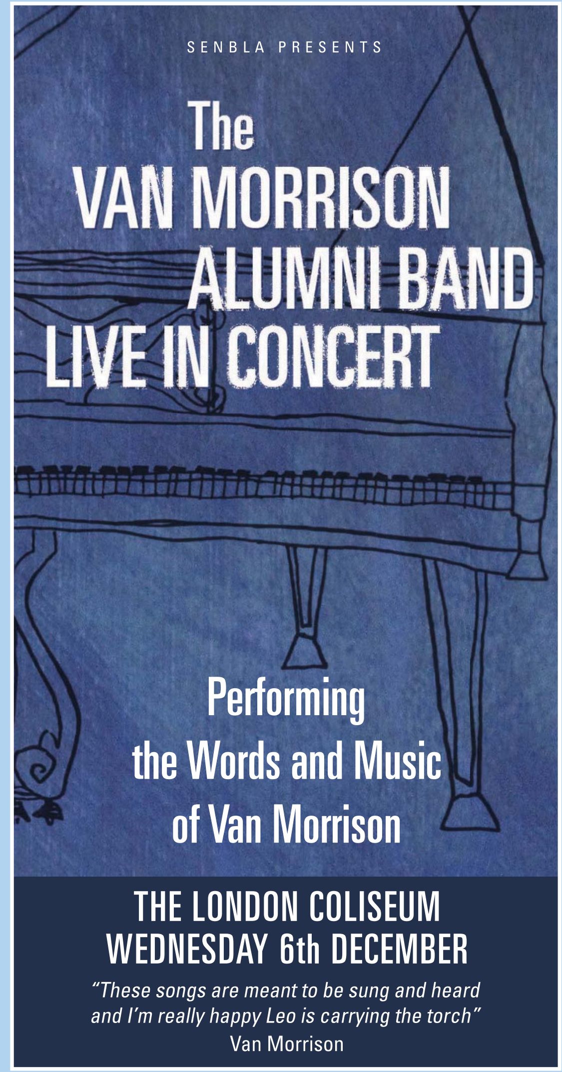
I went home. Arlene cleared the house of things (lighters, pipes), of people (dealers, users). There was even an Uber driver who had been staying with me, and he got put out too. Arlene hired caretakers instead and made sure that either she or my daughter Phunne stuck close to oversee the situation, make sure drugs didn't creep back into the picture. If it had been visit one, two, or three, who knows what would have happened? But it was visit four and I knew what needed to happen. People say that when you kick, you take it one day at a time. I didn't. I just decided that I would quit and I did. It wasn't that I didn't like the drugs. I liked them. If it hadn't been a choice between them and life, I might still be doing them. But it was and I'm not.

Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin) by Sly Stone is published on 17 October by Orion.

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'We can't live in a world where everything is whitewashed'

From her standup gigs to her frank new memoir, Lou Sanders is keen to push the boundaries of what it's possible to talk about

Words: Rachel Aroesti
Portrait: Matt Stronge



"Can you say I wafted in looking stunning?" asks Lou Sanders, dissolving into laughter before she's even finished her sentence. She is joking, of course – the comedian isn't actually desperate for a hyperbolically awed 2000s glossy magazine-style depiction of herself in print. It's just that airing the silliest, cringiest, most wildly conceited response to any given situation – always coupled with a self-effacing acknowledgment of the ridiculousness of what she's saying – is Sanders' stock in trade.

What really happens is that Sanders strides into the Groucho Club (admittedly, quite a 2000s glossy mag setting) dressed, I will say, in a very fetching lilac jumpsuit. She is late but doesn't waste time with small talk. Before she's even properly sat down, she launches into her list of worries: she is anxious she'll be misquoted, or that something she tells me off the record will be accidentally printed. She then asks, out of nowhere, whether I've been crying. I haven't, I say, suddenly paranoid that my mascara is halfway down my cheeks. "Oh," she chuckles nervously. "Maybe I'm projecting."

If that sounds a touch chaotic, well, welcome to Sanders' world. Over the past decade, the Kent native has established herself as one of the more unpredictable figures in British comedy. Her mock-egocentric, relentlessly giddy (yes, she does laugh at her own jokes; it's part of her charm) and bracingly frank persona has lit up the standup circuit, as well as pretty much every comic parlour gameshow going. In 2019 she appeared on Taskmaster – a milestone for any rising comic – and won. More recently, she has been co-presenting Mel Giedroyc: Unforgivable, which sees a celebrity panel relate shameful stories from their pasts in an attempt to convince the hosts that they are the most morally dubious guest.

Recently, Sanders has been sharing some eye-watering tales of her own. In August, her moving, hilarious and generally astonishing memoir, What's That Lady Doing? False Starts and Happy Endings, was released to surprisingly little fanfare ("We've been light on the promo. Thank God you're here!" she guffaws). In it, she chronicles her traumatic early experiences with clarity, compassion and a non-stop stream of


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outrageous, distinctively Sanders-esque jokes, transferring her daffy standup persona to the page.

The book moves chronologically through Sanders' life, from feeling unwanted as a child to an adolescence defined by heavy drinking and scarred by sexual assault. The booze-abetted escapades – some enjoyably wild, some horrifying – continue into her 20s and 30s, until her binge-drinking starts to sabotage her attempts to make it as a comedian (a career she came to relatively late, having worked in TV for more than a decade beforehand). Finally, she gets sober, gets help and becomes a successful standup.

That happy ending isn't completely straightforward, however. Sanders begins the book by worrying how her family will respond to her description of her childhood, and you can see why: contact with her father is minimal, while her treatment at the hands of her late stepdad – who insulted her and lied to others about her behaviour – meant she ended up moving out of the family home at 15. ("This is obviously just my side of the story," she writes, "but good luck getting his, because he's dead ... I didn't do it!"). Her mother, while supportive at times, engages in her fair share of disappointing parenting, too.

A month on from publication and "the dust has settled", Sanders says tentatively. "No one really wants to be written about, which is a shame, even if you think you've done it quite nicely. But we can't live in a world where everything's whitewashed." That said, What's That Lady Doing? is far from the score-settling exercise it could have been. What rings out from every page is astounding levels of generosity and forgiveness directed towards those that have mistreated her.

Her memoir was not initially so magnanimous. "The first draft was full of burning resentment and then one of my healers ... I know, excuse that sentence, *one* of my healers as well, bloody hell," she eyerolls. "She said: 'You have to look at them with the compassion that you would want when you've made mistakes,' and so then I was able to do a much kinder draft."

As that anecdote suggests, the second half of the book sees Sanders turn to alternative therapies, complementary medicine and support groups in an attempt to come to terms with the trauma she has experienced, and let go of the resentment she (unsurprisingly) feels. In adulthood, she comes to love and celebrate her stepfather's quirks and shortcomings, attends AA meetings and undergoes eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy to deal with the incredibly disturbing abuse she has been subjected to – including rape and sexual assault – by multiple men. Reckoning with the latter has been a slow process: "There's so much shame attached to it; you're not even revealing it to yourself. You're getting on with your life trying to forget about it; you know it's there, but you're like: I'll deal with that when I can."

Someone like Lou
Sanders on stage at the Leicester Square theatre, London in 2022



PAUL GILBEY

Early on in our conversation, Sanders expresses concern that anything she says about the news of Russell Brand being accused of sexual assault by four women – which broke days before we meet – might overshadow discussion of her own career. But mention of her personal experiences naturally brings her on to the topic. "The one thing I will say on the Russell Brand thing is that it blows my mind that people still don't want to believe women – and that's why I put that stuff [about assault] in the book – to let people know that it's more ubiquitous than [it seems]." Brand denies the allegations.

She recently deleted her X (formerly Twitter) account "because there were so many people supporting him". Brand has been "clever", she alleges. "For years, he's known this is going to come out so he's been going in a different direction," – essentially, sowing mistrust in the mainstream media. She says people have told her about their experiences with Brand.

'If you're a producer and you know someone's a rapist, don't hire them. Beyond that, I don't know'

Sanders did not keep this information to herself. At a gig this spring, she spoke about it on stage. "I just basically outed Russell Brand [as a predator] but in an amusing way and not at the cost of the victims," is how she recalls it. In the industry, says Sanders, "everyone knew". That said, she is keen to stress that this issue is not unique to the television or comedy industries. I ask about a passage in her book where she mentions a TV producer who "has date-raped so many women", including one of Sanders' friends, but is still posting "Instagram stories about being at Soho House". Her response is not what I was expecting.

"I'm not going to discuss any of that," she says. "I don't want it to be a witch hunt. I want to talk about my book, I don't want it to be overshadowed." This is in the book, though. "Then people can then find it in the book. I think there are rapists in every industry. It's very hard to monitor it. What do you do? If you're a producer and you know someone's a rapist, don't hire them. Beyond that, I don't know."

We can, however, talk about the other ways in which Sanders is working to make comedy less hostile to the reality of women's lives. She is determined to bust taboos by discussing her "XL" labia in her live work and her writing. ("It's not *that* big, I've never got it trapped in a lift, OK?" she writes during a very funny passage in the memoir.) She is struggling, however, to broadcast this fact on television. "I did Live at the Apollo three years ago and talked about my labia and they cut it," she says, before revealing that she has recently filmed another episode where she mentioned it again. "I'll see if they leave it in this time."

Despite being refreshingly upfront, there is one thing Sanders won't divulge: her age. In the book she says she didn't tell anyone how old she really was for "a long time" because she "wasn't comfortable with it" – without actually revealing what it is. I ask if she will tell me now but she demurs, citing ageism in the entertainment business. The 1985 birthdate on Wikipedia is wrong, she says – she has asked her agent to have it taken it down twice – but aside from that will only say that "people can piece it together" if they listen to the entire archive of her irreverent chat podcast Cuddle Club.

It may be missing key biographical details, but Sanders' tale of rebuilding herself is full of far more valuable stuff: radical forgiveness and compassion, hard-won wisdom, the ability to make light of life's darkness and impressive insight on the human condition. I particularly liked her thoughts on shame, an emotion that "doesn't motivate change, quite the opposite", she writes. "You think that is who you are, so you double down, a lost cause." Sanders snorts when I pay her the compliment. "Are we putting it on the syllabus of schools now?!" she laughs. They could do a lot worse.

What's That Lady Doing? False Starts and Happy Endings is out now.



← **The delivery of presents for Prince Dara Shikoh's wedding in December 1632, c 1640**
This image from the Padshahnama, a history of a Mughal emperor, was presented to George III and is still held in the Royal Collection. It depicts a lavish wedding complete with splashes of bright yellow turmeric used in wedding rituals to this day. Its use as the cover for a 1997 edition of the Padshahnama saw it become an important source for south Asian artists.

→ **Hamra Abbas**
All Rights Reserved, 2004
This is one of four digital prints responding to the image of Prince Dara Shikoh's wedding. Abbas, in a nod to the painting's physical removal from India, here removes the gifts from the wedding guests. In another panel she depicts only the gifts, and in the other two she reproduces the copyright terms and title page from an art catalogue, underlying not just how important the actual objects are, but also how access to them is contained.



Small wonders

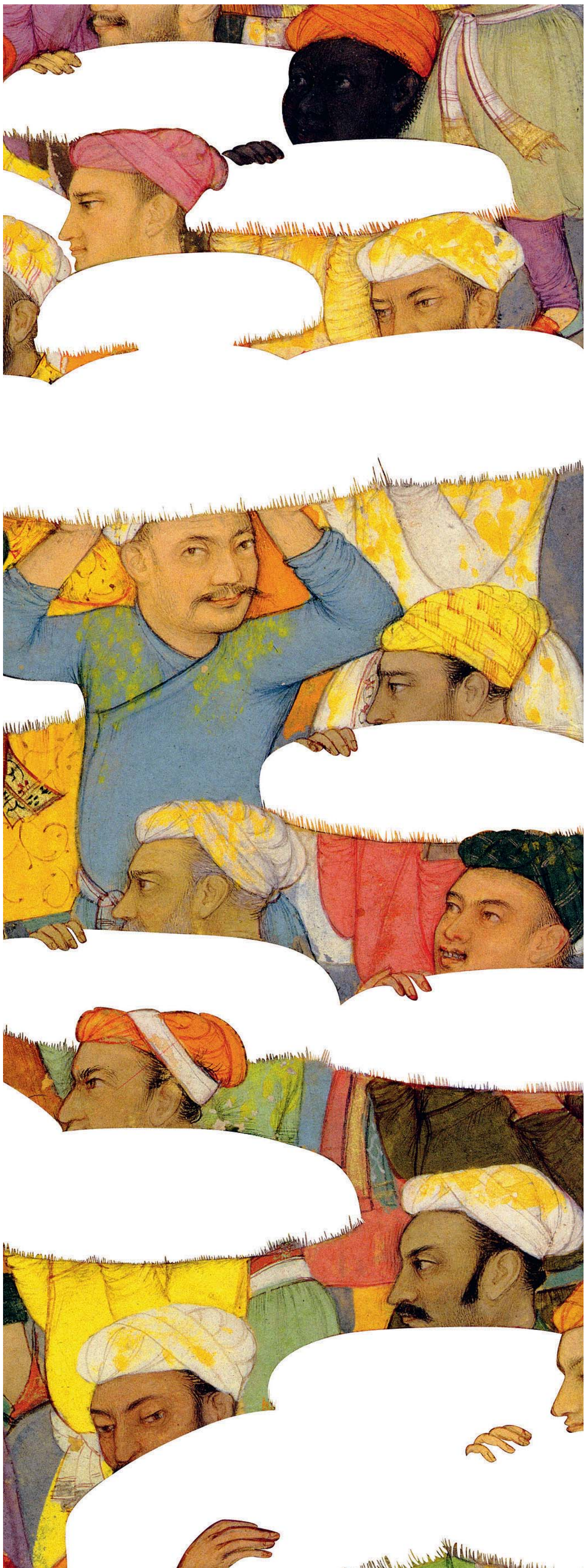
How did thousands of south Asian miniatures come to be in the UK? A new exhibition explores their history as well as modern responses to the works

Words: Nicholas Wroe

No one knows exactly how many south Asian miniature paintings are held in public and private collections in the UK, but Hammad Nasar, co-curator of a new exhibition at the MK Gallery in Milton Keynes, estimates it is at least 100,000. "As a sort of a thought exercise: imagine if there were 20,000 works by, say, Turner sitting in museums in Lahore or New Delhi," he says. "What would that mean? And to whom?"

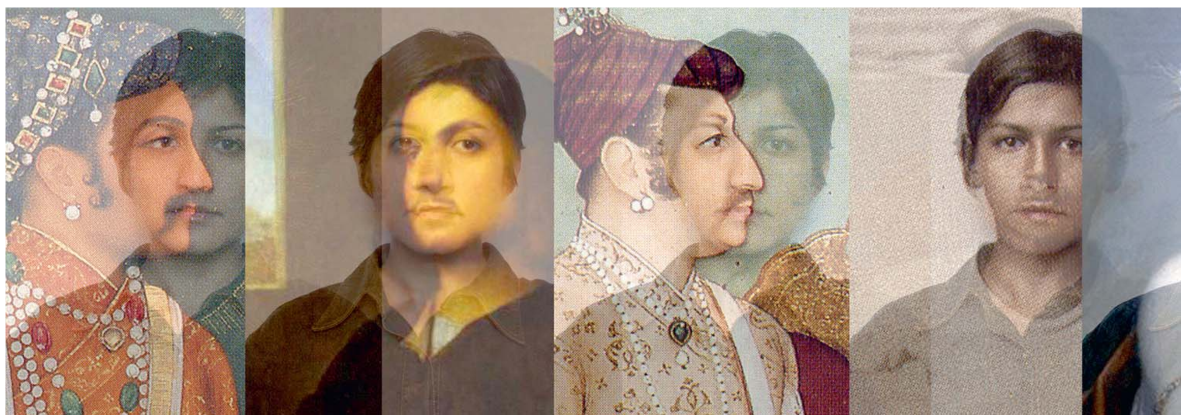
Beyond the Page will feature more than 170 artworks, including miniature paintings going back to the mid-16th century and the responses of 20th- and 21st-century artists - from south Asia and beyond - to these works, and to the form in general. Not that "miniature" is a "terribly agreed term", says Nasar. "It's a bit like when people say 'the Middle East': the middle of where? East of what?" While the works are generally small, "they don't need to be the size of your thumbnail. They more share an approach to materials, a rigour of application and a kind of intimacy of encounter, no matter what the scale."

First emerging about 1200 to illustrate Buddhist and Jain texts, miniature paintings went on to depict secular as well as religious subjects - domestic, courtly and ceremonial moments. The works tend to be small because they were usually bound together, making a hybrid form of art and book. "The first audience wasn't people filing past museum walls," says Nasar, "instead they were gathered together, maybe after dinner, and the works would be passed from one to another, held in people's hands and brought close to their eyes to better see the intricate details. It's that kind of intimacy artists are still attracted to."





→ **Dip Chand**
Portrait of William Fullerton, c 1764
The Company School of painting has been described as the Instagram of its day. Here, Fullerton, a Scottish doctor who had made his fortune in India, is seen adopting an aristocratic Bengali lifestyle while retaining a British sense of dress. Company School artists were often among the finest of the time, employed by the British after the decline of local royal patronage.



↑ **Nusra Latif Qureshi**
Did You Come Here to Find History?, 2009
These digital portraits, on a nine metre-long film scroll, include both the artist as well as historical figures. The transparency of the material emphasises the palimpsestic nature of both art and history.



← **Women in outdoor cloaks, c 1720-40**
This work first appeared in book form, as a copy of an image on the reverse painted in the century before. Patrons would encourage their artists to copy older work, as well as alter the presentation of the art, in an ongoing process of curation, addition and subtraction.

ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST/HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III; COLLECTION OF KAMRAN M ANWAR; VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM; COURTESY OF NUSRA LATIF QURESHI

The works on display have been imported to the UK for more than 400 years, acquired through gifts, purchases, commissions and less scrupulous methods. There is even an important branch of miniatures called the Company School of painting, in which colonial patrons commissioned local artists to capture themselves, their families and their surroundings, resulting in a remarkable record of the British in India.

But the traffic has not been entirely one way. In the 1960s, artists Zahoor ul Akhlaq and Gulam Mohammed Sheikh studied at the Royal College of Art in London and, independently, found themselves walking through the miniatures collection of the V&A on their way to classes. "Of course, they were already familiar with miniature paintings," says Nasar, "but the intensity of these everyday encounters, and the opportunity to engage with scholars, saw them look anew at the work and expand their visions. They returned home to arguably the most important art schools in Pakistan and India respectively, and their influence over artists and institutions is still being felt today."

Over the centuries, the miniature has symbolised many things: the vast wealth and power of those who commissioned the work; the impact of colonialism; and also of anti-colonialism, when adopted by local artists as an indigenous artform.

"It can symbolise different things, depending on which century and in which place you happen to be," says Nasar. "The miniature is one of those Rorschach tests that allows different people to see different things."

Beyond the Page: South Asian Miniature Painting and Britain, 1600 to Now, is at the MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, to 28 January.

Out





Going out & Staying in

A cultural primer for the week ahead, whether you're living it up or lying down ...

Cinema

Golda
Out now
Starring Helen Mirren as Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, this biopic from Guy Nattiv focuses on Meir's premiership during the Yom Kippur war in the 1970s. Also featuring Liev Schreiber (above) as Henry Kissinger.

BlackBerry
Out now
Comedy-drama channelling the likes of The Social Network, only it's the slightly goofier inventors of the BlackBerry whose rise and fall is here to make the rest of us glad we aren't tech bros. Starring Glenn Howerton (It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia) and Jay Baruchel (Knocked Up).

The Exorcist: Believer
Out now
As the band Journey so memorably advised us, don't stop believin', because if you didn't think you were gonna see Ellen Burstyn reprise her famous role as the ultimate worried mother in The Exorcist any time soon, have a little faith: she's back, and so are the demons. This time, that means two little girls showcasing a vocabulary beyond their years.

The Great Escaper
Out now
Everyone has something they would attempt a jailbreak for. Second world war veteran Bernard Jordan's motivation for escaping from his nursing home was attending the 70th anniversary D-day commemorations in France in 2014 - thereby providing the perfect based-on-a-true-story starring role for Michael Caine. *Catherine Bray*

Gigs

Blink-182
Wed to 16 October; tour starts London
The pop-punkers, now reunited with guitarist-vocalist Tom DeLonge, head out in support of forthcoming album, One More Time ... While the title track is a sombre ballad, More Than You Know should slot in nicely alongside the more full-blooded stuff on the setlist. *Michael Cragg*

Andrew McCormack
Birmingham Conservatoire, Thursday; Lighthouse, Poole, Fri; touring to 31 Oct
UK pianist Andrew McCormack covers many bases, from prog-jazz to postbop and commissions for the LSO, but 2022's Terra Firma reaffirmed his jazz roots. His fine acoustic trio play here, with some gigs adding saxophonist Denys Baptiste. *John Fordham*

Royal Northern Sinfonia
The Glasshouse, Gateshead, Friday
Violinist Maria Włoszczowska, the Royal Northern Sinfonia's new artistic director, takes charge of a programme with Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante K364 as its centrepiece, joined by Lera Auerbach's Sogno di Stabat Mater, and Mahler's arrangement of Schubert's Death and the Maiden. *Andrew Clements*

S Club
Thur to 29 October; tour starts Manchester
Now a five-piece following the tragic death of Paul Cattermole and the departure of Hannah Spearritt, S Club (below) celebrate their 25th anniversary. Expect enduring bops Reach and Don't Stop Movin', plus pathos as they pay tribute to their late bandmate Cattermole. *MC*





Art

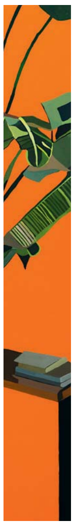
Real Families: Stories of Change
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, to 7 January
An experiment in social reporting that brings together radical academic analysis of the 21st-century family with some of the boldest and most intimate modern art. Tracey Emin, Joy Labinjo (work pictured, above) and Paula Rego paint and document their lives up close while Lucian Freud sees close relations with terrifying objectivity.

Claudette Johnson
The Courtauld Gallery, London, to 14 January
Powerfully observed portraits and studies of the human figure that also take an ironic and challenging view of art history. Realist portrayals of Black women today contrast with cliches in works such as Standing Figure With African Masks. Johnson's acute awareness of art's pasts makes her a natural for the Courtauld.

Nengi Omuku
Hastings Contemporary, Saturday to 3 March
Dreamlike paintings of nature from an artist based in Lagos who is also a florist and gardener. Omuku trained in Britain but this is the Nigerian visionary's first big UK exhibition. Her pastoral idylls are painted on the traditional Nigerian fabric sanyan, and include an epic new work called, simply, Eden.

Georg Baselitz
Serpentine South Gallery, London, to 7 January
Raw wooden carvings by one of the most powerful artists to emerge from Germany after 1945. Since the early 1960s, Baselitz has been pummelling and inverting the human figure. His acute sense of our existential human plight has intensified with age. These sculptures from a decade ago show him on a roll. *Jonathan Jones*

AP; LEIGH KELLY; COURTESY OF JOY LABINJO/TIWANI



In





Stage

Aditi Mangaldas: Forbidden
Sadler's Wells, London, Friday to 14 October
Sixty-three-year-old Indian kathak dancer and choreographer Aditi Mangaldas can still hold an audience in her palm and is unafraid of powerful subjects. The solo Forbidden asks why women's bodies and desires are repressed, controlled and punished. *Lyndsey Winship*

The Lovely Boys & Friends
Moth Club, London, Thursday
"Northern freaks" Joe Kent-Walters and Mikey Bligh-Smith bring their meticulously weird, clown-adjacent cabaret to the capital, with pals including Luke Rollason, Pravanya Pillay and puppeteer Freddie Hayes. *Rachel Aroesti*

Dear England,
Prince Edward theatre London, Monday to 13 January
James Graham's take on the travails of the England national football team scored big at the National Theatre. This transfer sees Joseph Fiennes reprise the role of Gareth Southgate. Feel-good fare with the added nail-biting drama of penalty kicks. *Arifa Akbar*

The Score
Theatre Royal Bath, Thur to 28 October
Brian Cox may be best known as Succession's megalomaniac patriarch but here he returns to the stage with a turn as Johann Sebastian Bach, in Oliver Cotton's biographical play about Bach's relationship with the dangerous Prussian King Frederick II. *AA*



Streaming

Fall of the House of Usher
Netflix, Thursday
Mike Flanagan, creator of The Haunting of Hill House, loosely adapts Edgar Allan Poe's short story. This version (above) centres on a CEO of a dodgy pharmaceutical company, whose family begin to bear the bloody brunt of his immoral activities.

Lessons in Chemistry
Apple TV+, Friday
Bonnie Garmus's 2022 novel about a 1960s chemist turned TV presenter who sneaks teachings about science into her housewife-friendly cookery programme was a rare kind of literary sensation. This prompt adaptation sees Oscar-winner Brie Larson in the role of the unfairly sidelined but unwaveringly determined Elizabeth Zott.

The Reckoning
BBC One & iPlayer, Monday, 9pm
The most controversial drama of the year finally arrives. Starring Steve Coogan as Jimmy Savile, The Reckoning revisits the presenter's heinous crimes. Could this provide a moment of national catharsis? Or will it end up a nauseating attempt to mine trauma for content?

Frasier
Paramount+, Friday
Everyone's favourite Seattle-based snob returns in this reboot of the classic sitcom. But don't expect to see the old gang back together: having returned to Boston to reconnect with his son, Kelsey Grammer's titular psychiatrist has a new sparring partner in the form of posh professor pal Alan (Nicholas Lyndhurst). *RA*



Games

Forza Motorsport
Out Tuesday, PC, Xbox Series X/S
The long-running racing sim has been rather overshadowed by its Forza Horizon spin-off, but this hugely upgraded model (above) should bring the original back into contention. With more than 500 cars and 800 upgrade options, as well as advanced handling and intricate visuals, it's one serious ride.

Total War: Pharaoh
Out Wednesday, PC
Pitching a golden age Egyptian empire against the Canaanites and the Hittites, the latest title in the acclaimed battle strategy series has all the ancient weapons and tactics you could hope for, with the added feature of huge Biblical storms to contend with. *Keith Stuart*

Albums

Sufjan Stevens – Javelin
Out now
After a string of experimental projects, Stevens (above) returns to full singer-songwriter mode on this 10th album. Featuring additional guitar from the National's Bryce Dessner, and a small choir that elevates singles So You Are Tired and Will Anybody Ever Love Me?, it's autumn's perfect soundtrack.

Dorian Electra – Fanfare
Out now
The Texas art-pop provocateur returns with this follow-up to 2020's similarly bonkers My Agenda. Exploring the parasocial relationship between fans and pop idols, Fanfare is packed full of WTF moments, from the pummelling industrial-synth freakout Sodom & Gomorrah to recent single Puppet's skewed take on classical music.

Hannah Diamond – Perfect Picture
Out now
Never one to rush, pop star Hannah Diamond follows up 2019's similarly long-in-the-making Reflections with this second album. Produced by Scritti Politti keyboard whiz David Gamson, with additional contributions from AG Cook and Kesha, Perfect Picture explores artifice and reality via 12 shiny slithers of buffed-up electropop.

Glasser – Crux
Out now
On her first album in a decade, Cameron Mesirow, AKA Glasser (below), contorts her already pretty extraordinary voice into new shapes. Influenced by the Balkan style of singing she studied during her hiatus, songs such as Easy and Drift gently blossom into high-wire vocal exercises, supported by skittering electronics and nods at folk. *MC*





Brain food

Notes on Loving
Podcast
Curator Aliyah Hasinah's new series (above) takes a leaf from bell hooks's book All About Love: New Visions in exploring the everyday aspects of love. From loving knowledge to loving the process of creating, Hasinah hosts absorbing conversations with academics and artists.

Dialectsarchive.com
Online
This archive of English language dialects and accents from around the world isn't just an invaluable resource for actors but its oral histories section is also a fascinating glimpse into real-life stories from Suffolk to Cuba.

First Ladies of Hip Hop
BBC Two, Sat, 9.35pm
With hip-hop currently celebrating its 50th anniversary, this three-part series examines the often overlooked contribution of its female artists. Insights into the early successes and struggles of MCs such as Debbie D and the Mercedes Ladies are eye-opening. *Ammar Kalia*

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EIKE SCHROTER/NETFLIX; YAO YUAN; SUFJAN STEVENS

Since finding fame aged 16 as part of controversial collective Odd Future, rapper Earl Sweatshirt has spent a decade moving away from his youthful self, whether through avant-garde jazz or reckoning with his past rhymes

Future imperfect

Words: Sasha Mistlin
Portrait: Ryo Tanzawa

The arrival of Odd Future was a cattle prod to popular culture. Armed with just their laptops and alarmingly confessional hip-hop tracks that contrasted tales of teenage woe with violent fantasies, a dozen high-schoolers rode a tidal wave of rap forums, Twitter and the then cresting Tumblr to bestride the world stage. They emerged from Los Angeles at the end of the 2000s, before exploding in 2011 with the release of Tyler, the Creator's controversial breakout hit Yonkers. The group sparked a thousand thinkpieces about their controversial lyrics, which in turn only made them more popular.

While Tyler was the leader, Odd Future's first flush of fame was haunted by the spectre of Thebe Neruda Kgositsile, AKA Earl Sweatshirt. With his malevolent tone and ultraviolent, often brilliant lyrics, Kgositsile occupied a special place in Odd Future lore from the drop of his debut single, the self-titled Earl, on which he proclaimed he was "twisted, sicker than mad cattle in fact I'm off / Six different liquors, with a Prince wig plastered on". As memorable as the song was its viral video, which showed



My name is Earl Kgositsile says he had to make his persona 'inhabitable'



DOMINIQUE OLIVETO

the 16-year-old and his friends blending a mixture of booze, weed, pills and cough syrup before throwing it all up. The grainy camera footage then pivots to the group picking up gruesome skateboarding injuries.

All the while, Earl continues to rap what the now 29-year-old Kgositsile, "super-ashamed" of his past homophobic language, will only refer to as "the F-slur".

"I have to face all that shit," he says. "I wanted to walk shit back hella times, I wanted to figure out how to take shit off the internet for ever."

Had Earl stayed within his niche audience, perhaps Kgositsile and his friends would have had the chance to grow up a bit before exploding on to the global scene. Unfortunately, a combination of their talent and the internet meant Odd Future's very first work reached a massive audience: Kgositsile was on the map, and thirsty fans waited on his debut album. Except just as promptly as he'd arrived, he vanished. Fans later learned that his mother, concerned at the content of the Earl video and the crowd he was running with, had packed him off to Coral Reef Academy, a boarding school for at-risk boys in Samoa.

"That shit was some high-speed parenting," he tells me more than a decade on. "It was a highly risky move." But did it pay off – sending him to one of the farthest corners of the globe just as stardom beckoned? "Yeah it paid off," he continues. "I would not be *here*, if I didn't go there. I don't know if I'd be dead but I wouldn't be here like this."

Even in his absence, Kgositsile was very much at the centre of Odd Future, with fans chanting "Free Earl" at gigs and awards show appearances. While his friends had been touring the world and chin-wagging with rap luminaries such as Pharrell and RZA, Kgositsile had been away from the spotlight for 18 months, watching expectations grow to unmanageable proportions: "Shit was too big, bro; I feel like Doris [his 2013 debut album] was a shot in the foot. While I was gone, motherfuckers was like: 'Brother, the rap messiah, he's gonna cut Nas' head off. He's gonna come back and dominate everything.' That was the expectation. And I came back and I just made some more music with my friends. Motherfuckers was like: '*Is that it?*' It was awkward and I couldn't handle it."

Kgositsile is speaking to me prior to performing a show at Koko in north London to mark a decade since Doris's release. He has mixed feelings about the album: while not disowning his early work, he says that preparing to perform it was a challenge: "It gave me so much anxiety that first day because I had done this 10-year walk away from it. I faced it. I accepted it. But I didn't have to actually listen to Doris." As well as the "F-slurs" and the threats of violence, the embarrassment of Odd Future is contained in the fact that they took up so much space in the cultural ecosystem while being quite so immature. "Yeah," he cringes. "I mean it was a weird time … what's embarrassing is that I thought that shit was hot as fuck."

Kgositsile's career is one of two halves. There's his tenure as one of the core members of Odd Future, albeit with his time in Samoa leaving him out of sync with the group's success. That period produced a mixtape, Earl, his debut album Doris and a follow-up, I Don't Like Shit, I Don't Go Outside, released in 2015 around the time of Odd Future's disbandment. "I had a fallout with my friends and begun the arduous trek of rugged individualism," he says, tongue in cheek.

The second half of his career came after I Don't Like Shit, as Kgositisile stepped away from the limelight to re-evaluate his career and musical style. There would be no full-length release for more than three years, until 2018's Some Rap Songs, a collection of barely two-minute tracks that blurred the line between hip-hop and avant-garde jazz. The result was stunning, receiving acclaim across the board.

'I have to face my past lyrics. I wanted to figure out how to take it off the internet for ever'

Post-Some Rap Songs, his music is not only defined by the fusion of jazz and hip-hop but by brief, hookless tracks that usually feature single drawn-out verses and lines that meander between and across bars. It's fair to say that Earl no longer sounds like the typical LA rapper – if he ever did. "I say shit like an LA nigga but I don't make LA music," he says. I ask where his music's from. "I'm gonna say 'myself' even though that sucks," he replies. The exchange is reminiscent, I say, of his line from Chum when he said he was "too black for the white kids and too white for the blacks". Immediately, he is riled: "I hate that bar. One of the hardest parts of the Doris tour is saying that. It's an undercooked take. I was 18!"

Kgositsile is no longer a boy. You would hope this isn't something he needs to prove, having grown up on record over the course of the last decade. He is nearing 30 and has just dropped his fifth album. Its title, Voir Dire, is a nod to his mother's legal career (she is Cheryl Harris, UCLA professor of civil rights and civil liberties). A collaboration with producer and DJ the Alchemist, the album wrestles with Kgositsile's fatherhood, the looming presence of his own father, the South African poet Keorapetse Kgositsile, who died in 2018, and his own mythology over an all-killer 27 minutes.

"God is a comedian," says Kgositsile, of becoming a father. "That was the craziest punchline of my life. My dad died and at first I got mad. I was like, you just gonna die and I didn't get to spill my fucking guts and have you look at me awkwardly while I go through a laundry list of things I didn't like from the past 26 years." He says after his dad died he would sit around with his brother reflecting on how easy fatherhood would be: "I was like: 'Oh, I'd be such a good dad. It's not even hard.' And then God was like: 'Go ahead – have a child, bro.'"

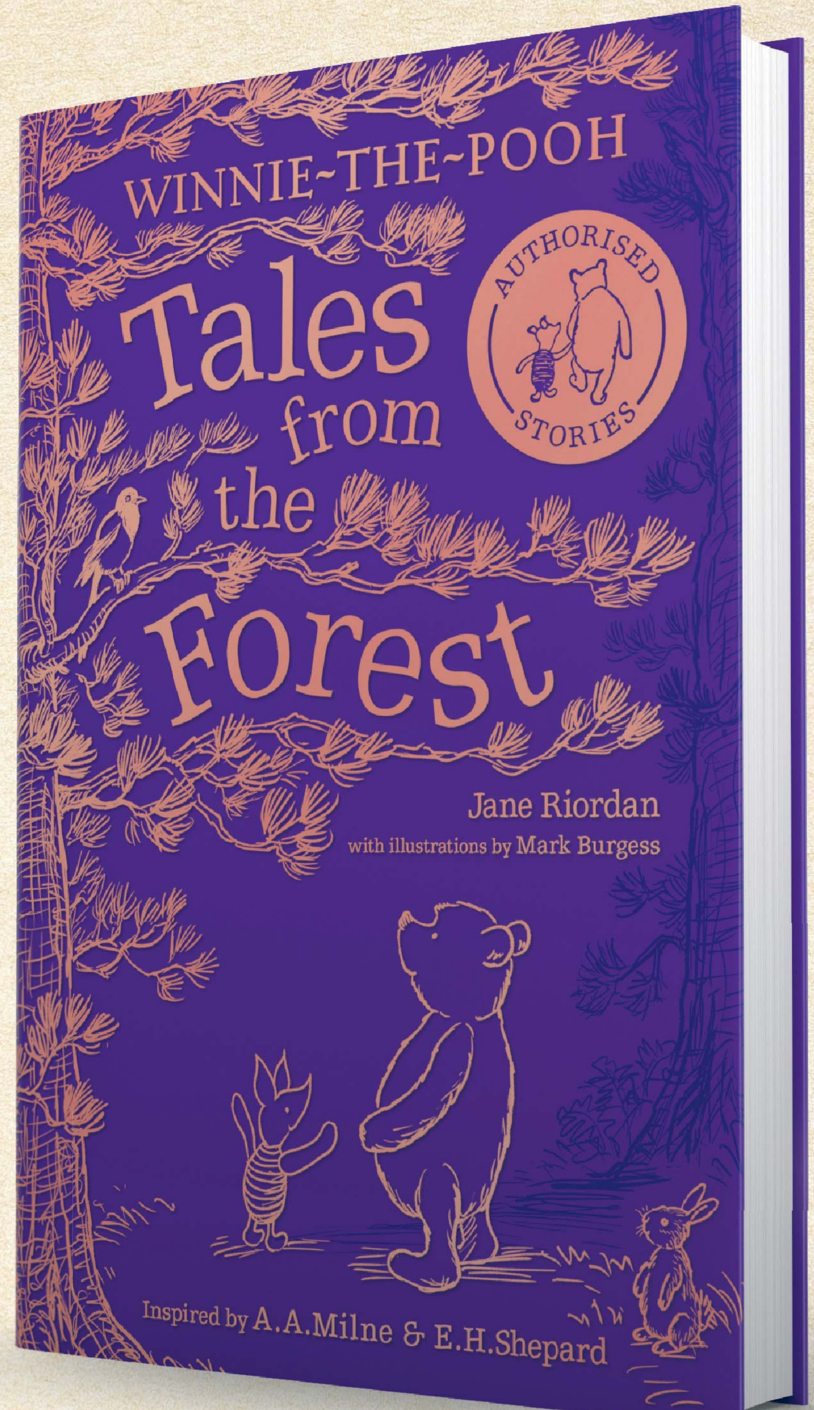
The album reaches its apotheosis on closer Free the Ruler where Kgositsile takes on his depression and his relationship with his parents, rapping: "I'm back cuttin' up a list of reasons I love my mother's laugh / The best one is that's just what it is". It's a beautiful song and, when pressed, the one that Kgositsile names his "dying song", the one that were he to pass away tomorrow, he'd be happiest that it exists. "If I left Earth, I'd be OK because of that one."

Given that he was just 16 when he took on his rap persona, is Earl Sweatshirt a suit that still fits Kgositsile? Perhaps the day will come he feels more confident releasing music under his real name? "No, I fuck with it," he says of his rap name. He didn't want to leave it as a monument to his earlier, more regrettable behaviour. "I had to make it inhabitable during that Some Rap Songs period, *because* [of] Doris, *because* I was a little kid, *because* I was saying things that I look back on years later and think: 'Damn, I don't want to say that any more.' I had to make myself inhabitable, I had to make that name inhabitable. I couldn't leave Earl Sweatshirt like an abandoned building."

Voir Dire is out now.

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BOOKS

ESSAYS, FICTION *and* NONFICTION REVIEWS



The age of rage

'Orwellian' is an accusation increasingly levelled by both right and left but what does it mean, asks *Sandra Newman*, who has rewritten Nineteen Eighty-Four for our contemporary era of anger

A FEW YEARS ago, I got what, for a writer of political fiction, is a dream job. I was invited by the estate of George Orwell to write a retelling of Nineteen Eighty-Four from the point of view of Julia, the lover of the protagonist, Winston Smith. The concept had been in the air for years, until its writing seemed inevitable; by asking a trusted person to do it, they hoped to nudge it in a direction that did justice to the original. They wouldn't pay me, but after I'd finished and published the novel, they would give it their support and help it find its way in the world.

It was a huge compliment but also a daunting responsibility, and I was immediately engrossed in work: rereading Nineteen Eighty-Four, sketching plans and ideas, researching the political history that drove Orwell to write his book, drafting my first pages. My opening chapter – like Orwell's – was the well-known scene of the Two Minutes Hate.

The Two Minutes Hate is a ritual in which Party members gather to watch a film of the rebel leader Emmanuel Goldstein and express compulsory rage. Regardless of their beliefs, the audience finds this an easy task. "The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate," Orwell writes, "was not that one was obliged to act a part, but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within 30 seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp."

At the time I was reimagining this scene, I spent much of my day on Twitter. It was early 2021, and everyone there was chronically angry. People communicated by jeering, trading insults, hectoring, flinging accusations. The mildest disagreement could trigger a storm of ugly attacks. Any tweet might make thousands of people love bomb you, then turn on you, then fight viciously among themselves about whether you should be exalted or killed. It was like being in an abusive relationship with everyone in the world.

But now I was writing all day about the Two Minutes Hate, which is eerily like the worst of Twitter. My bedtime reading consisted of histories of the rise of Hitler and Stalin, memoirs of the Cultural Revolution and the Holodomor. All these periods were characterised by the violent rhetoric, demonisation of vulnerable groups, singling out of individuals as targets, and fear of going against the mob that were increasingly normalised by online behaviour – and by YouTube and cable TV channels devoted to political propaganda.

All that had changed was the rationale most commonly offered for this: that it was just a joke. Harassment was a form of joking, death threats were satire, slurs were meant ironically. With this excuse, even when a target was hurt in real life, the crime could be disowned by the people who had instigated it. They'd only been kidding around. How could their goofing, taken seriously by no one, be linked to such a tragedy?

Of course, those using these tactics are aware that kidding around is a highly effective way to incite violence. Perhaps the most infamous instance is Rwanda's Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM). This radio station, launched in 1993, used an informal, jokey, call-in format, in which the chat was interspersed with music. It was, in the words of one journalist, "like a conversation among Rwandans who knew each other well and were relaxing over some banana beer or a bottle of Primus in a bar … It was all fun. Some people left the bar, others came in, the conversation went on and stopped if it got too late, and the next day it took up again after work." True, all the discussion and jokes, even some songs, revolved around fear and hatred of the Tutsi minority, but the light tone made it easy to dismiss. As the Canadian ambassador to Rwanda, Lucie Edwards, later commented: "There were so many genuinely silly things being said on the station, so many obvious lies, that it was hard to take seriously." But within nine months of its opening, RTLM was directly mobilising and organising the Hutus of Rwanda to murder an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 of their Tutsi neighbours, hacking them to death with machetes. Women were often gang raped and genitally mutilated before being killed. At the peak of the genocide, an RTLM host jocularly scolded listeners: "You have missed some of the enemies. You must go back there and finish them off. The graves are not yet full!"

Perhaps it seems like a stretch to equate this with Fox News or TalkTV. But is it only a matter of time before the underlying threat presented by these channels becomes explicit? Hauntingly, three months before the Rwandan genocide, a group of political dignitaries, including Senator Edward Kennedy, advised that the international community should act to shut down RTLM. Had his advice been followed, the voices directing the genocide would have been taken off air, and hundreds of thousands of lives might have been saved. Even the most passionate free-speech absolutist would find it hard to oppose such a decision – especially with hindsight. But how can we know if a media outlet will ever become this dangerous? When it comes to free speech, where do we draw the line?

It's probably clear that mockery, however savage, isn't the red flag we're looking for. People make nasty



Illustration: Cristiana Couceiro

Main: Michael Radford's film version of Nineteen Eighty-Four; with Suzanna Hamilton as Julia and John Hurt as Winston, below

jokes all the time. You might laugh while saying you'd like to see your boss thrown into a tank of piranhas, when in reality you would find it harrowing if it really occurred. One distinction that has been widely embraced on the left is that between punching up and punching down. Punching up is when you make fun of someone with more power than you; punching down is when you mock people with less. This intuitively sounds right. Anyone can ridicule Boris Johnson without worrying about the repercussions for his everyday wellbeing, but if a public figure mocks an unemployed Black man, or unemployed Black men in general, it can have real consequences. Too many people are looking for excuses for callousness and violence toward such men; indeed, they are being harassed and killed by the authorities there to protect them.

However, jokes that punch down are everywhere in classic satire. What else can we call the countless scenes in Don Quixote where we're invited to laugh at a mentally troubled old man being beaten viciously for his mistakes? Or the sequence in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man about a Black sharecropper who has impregnated his daughter, in which the act of incest becomes a surreal extended joke? Even the silly running gag "I saw something nasty in the woodshed", from Stella Gibbons's Cold Comfort Farm, is essentially a joke at the expense of trauma victims.



COLLECTION CHRISTOPHEL/ALAMY; MOVIESTORE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



Orwell's language is used by rightwingers to indict 'wokeism'; any acknowledgment of moral ambiguity is called 'doublethink'

In Nineteen Eighty-Four, the insults rain down on the just and the unjust alike. Orwell's proles are ignorant and brutish; his middle classes utterly incapable of thought; while women are "always the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies". Orwell even mocks the Party's victims. In one scene, a man waiting to be tortured nervously praises the patriotism of the daughter who turned him in, while "casting a longing glance at the lavatory pan". His surrender to the diarrhoea occasioned by his suppressed terror is then played as comedy.

Yet Nineteen Eighty-Four has been passionately embraced by survivors of Stalin and the Cultural Revolution, by refugees from North Korea. Their reaction is not "Why was this privileged outsider so disdainful of us?" but "How did he understand so well?" In Orwell's harshest passages, they have seen the unfiltered, fearless expression of their own long-hidden shame and anger.

So can we say that satire can punch down safely, as long as it expresses an important truth? Unfortunately, it's not that simple. The worst political actors – neo-Nazis, shills for dictators, terrorist recruiters – always sell themselves as brave truth-tellers. But while there are no simple rules about when satire is dangerous, there are ways to tell when satire is good for you. A satire that makes you feel good about already having all the "right" views may be comforting, but it's not as much use as one that tangles with you, surprises, wrong-foots and makes you question what you really think.

From the time Animal Farm was written, the right wing has been keen to claim Orwell. Originally, this was because of his outspoken criticism of the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, the CIA even funded film adaptations of both Nineteen Eighty-Four and Animal Farm, with the aim of building support for the cold war. Nowadays, the language of Nineteen Eighty-Four is used by rightwingers to indict "wokeism". Any new coinage from the left is called "Newspeak"; any attempt to acknowledge moral ambiguity is dismissed as "doublethink". With the single word "Orwellian", a college's overreaching speech policy, for example, is framed as an existential threat to the free world.

But Nineteen Eighty-Four wasn't a warning against a university's inclusivity statement. It was a warning about men like Trump and Putin and the violent mass movements they inspire. Men like Erdoğan, Modi, Orbán, and Maduro: events such as Duterte's mass killings in the Philippines, Bukele's mass arrests in El Salvador, Xi's ubiquitous surveillance and social credit system and concentration camps and institutionalised torture in China. Orwell's great political works speak to our current moment, when seemingly every country is infested with would-be autocrats, using the old playbooks with their lines about "enemies of the people" and "lying media" and "globalists".

When my Nineteen Eighty-Four book was announced, described as a "feminist retelling", I was treated to a personal experience of how far things had gone. The news attracted a storm of misogynist and antisemitic abuse in rightwing tweets, blogs, YouTube videos, even newspaper articles. This was long before the novel was available to be read – before I'd barely written a few chapters. Still, all the attackers were sure what would be in it: a full-throated endorsement of Big Brother. They also declared there was a plot to replace Nineteen Eighty-Four in school curricula with my book – despite the fact that it was being published in the US by Orwell's publisher and had been endorsed by the Orwell estate, two organisations that would be out of pocket were Nineteen Eighty-Four to be dropped. It's still unclear to me whether the attackers believed what they were saying. Were they lying or deluded? Or was this a real feat of doublethink – the ability to believe two contrary ideas at once – where no such distinction can be drawn?

In his essay Looking Back on the Spanish War, Orwell observes how we underestimate the risk that fascism, or "a combination of several fascisms", will prevail throughout the whole world because, "nourished for hundreds of years on a literature in which Right invariably triumphs in the last chapter, we believe half-instinctively that evil always defeats itself in the long run". This is a fatal delusion. "We have become too civilised to grasp the obvious. For the truth is very simple. To survive you often have to fight, and to fight you have to dirty yourself. War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil." We no longer have the luxury to indulge in quibbles about civility, nor do we have the time for an emotionally satisfying but futile Two Minutes Hate. We must speak, write, make jokes, argue, fight, with an eye only to what is most effective. We must organise against fascism as if our lives depended on it. They do. The threat is here; the time Orwell warned about is now.

Julia by Sandra Newman will be published by Granta on 19 October.



Rupert Murdoch, who has announced his retirement

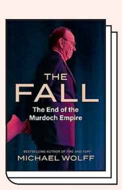
MARY ALTAFFER/AP

A succession of absurdities

A forensic holding to account of Rupert Murdoch and the power of Fox News is desperately needed - but this isn't it

Dorothy Byrne

MEDIA
The Fall
The End of the Murdoch Empire
Michael Wolff
BRIDGE STREET, £25



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I paid a friend to read a boring book about British television so I could pretend to my Channel 4 bosses that, as head of news and current affairs, I had done so. I bought her a slap-up meal, from my own pocket, in recompense. Her job was to report back to me on any points of interest. There were none.

I am for you, dear readers, that friend who reads a poor book about television on your behalf so you can pretend at dinner parties that you have read it.

The book in question chronicles the recent history of Fox News and its relationship with the Murdoch family. An important subject. Without the support of Murdoch and Fox, there may well have been no President Trump. A good subject but not, sadly, a good book.

Perhaps to excite the reader, author Michael Wolff refers to the television drama Succession, which is allegedly inspired by the Murdochs. The difference between the drama and this book is not that the central character in Succession is called Logan Roy whereas here Rupert Murdoch is called Rupert Murdoch. The distinction is that Succession was created by the brilliant screenwriter Jesse Armstrong, and there is no great writing in The Fall.

Let me provide two brief excerpts to give you a flavour. Here is a passage about the vile Fox News presenter Sean Hannity: "Hannity, the everyman on air, was actually, an everyman in person … And, unlike most everymen, he could speak in full sentences. But his body was everyman. He was relaxed, uncaring, a large body going where it pleased. *So loose.* Unprotected."

And another glorious one: "And yet Hannity was impatient and seemed to traverse from doing the right thing to now needing to get on to so much more important business. Fox business. Trump business, whatever. Power exists. Even without [Fox News CEO, Roger] Ailes. Fox now was up for grabs."

> **The problem with this book is far more serious than bad writing. The story of Fox News is not a comedy, it's a tragedy for America**

As a journalist I look for evidence that what I am reading is true. But here, where I wanted sources, I got unattributed gossip. Entire conversations between the Murdochs and their apparatchiks are recorded without the reader being given supporting evidence. (In the acknowledgements, Wolff refers vaguely to "many sources who have helped me … best thanked by not being thanked here".) Murdoch and his family "grumble" or "scowl" as they speak, but there is no indication the author was there to hear or see them, or who might have witnessed them in his place. Motivation is ascribed to key characters, again without attribution. He says, for example, of the ghastly presenter Tucker Carlson, "He was starting to see himself as a human Rorschach blot." How on earth does Wolff know that? The reader isn't told.

Wolff tells us at the start that it will be a rollicking tale of "upstairs-downstairs shenanigans" and "broadside characters". Of course, were this book a brilliant comedic work, it might have been worth reading. We might have enjoyed some of its gossipy stories, although most don't surprise. It is no news that Murdoch thought Trump "an idiot", "a fool" and "plainly nuts". Fox CEO Ailes supposedly says, with a chortle, that Trump is ignorant and incompetent. Again, no surprise that many within Fox told each other the truth about Trump but gave another version to their audience. Wolff tells us Fox News is "a nest of vipers" where executives call each other words like "prick", "loonie", "crazy", or "wacko". I can believe they refer to people as "poofters" and "sluts", but it was shocking to read. As an important aside, I objected to Wolff's description of Elisabeth Murdoch, whom I know to be a significant force in UK television, as "blond" and "skittish". I didn't notice the hair colour of Lachlan and James Murdoch being deemed relevant.

But the problem with this book is far more serious than the bad writing, the unsourced gossip and the extraordinarily high count of the word "fuck". Wolff opines, "To appear to take the *real* Fox News, and, in the mind of the left, its almost war-criminal stature owners, less than seriously, to treat the Fox phenomenon and the Murdoch family as a cultural confection ripe for comedy, may be dangerously close to liberal sacrilege." But you don't need to be a lefty or to connect Rupert Murdoch to war crimes because his media outlets supported the Iraq war, or to give credit to the religious concept of sacrilege, to find this book seriously wanting. The recent story

of Fox News is not a comedy, it is a tragedy for America.

The book we need, the book that would be worth you spending several hours reading, would be one that does indeed take Fox News seriously because of its role in undermining public trust in the results of the 2020 presidential election, thereby putting US democracy itself at risk. Fox News is the dominant US news network. As Wolff says himself, it does not just report events, it causes them. When Fox said that the election had been “stolen”, its reputation gave credence to the lie. Those who marched to the Capitol on 6 January had watched Fox. Afterwards, Fox News had to pay $787.5m (£634m) to settle the claim brought by Dominion Voting Systems after the channel had stated on air that it helped fake the election result. Fox was forced to acknowledge publicly that it had spread falsehoods while some of its own presenters and executives knew privately the claims were untrue. The lie lives on, and may well contribute to Trump being re-elected.

Wolff says that the foremost mission of Fox is not in fact political, but the creation of a successful television product. Ailes is quoted as saying that news is a variety show. This is the problem when television news is unregulated. In so much of this book, men, and they are almost all men, talk about the news as if it’s a game. The one group of people who should read this book are those in this country who campaign for the abolition of our rules requiring news to be fair, accurate and duly impartial. Fox has profoundly influenced news and politics in the US. In the UK, the BBC is the most used platform, with 73% of adults watching or reading online. I know which I prefer. Wolff predicts the demise of Fox, and last week Rupert Murdoch announced his retirement. I won’t be missing either.

Dorothy Byrne is president of Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, and the former head of news and current affairs at Channel 4. To buy a copy of The Fall for £22 go to guardianbookshop.com



Madonna in Rotterdam, 1990

MICHEL LINSSEN/REDFERNS/GETTY

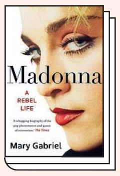
Portrait of an icon

The definitive life of a pop colossus

Fiona Sturges

MUSIC

Madonna
A Rebel Life
Mary Gabriel
CORONET, £35



When Madonna Louise Ciccone arrived in New York from Michigan aged 19 in 1978, she had a small suitcase, a winter coat and $35 in her pocket. In an interview with the broadcaster Howard Stern years later, she would admit that she was frightened: “The massive scale of New York took my breath away … I was poised for survival … But I was also scared shitless and freaked out by the smell of piss and vomit.”

In the ensuing years, Madonna would experience grinding poverty, living in a succession of cockroach-infested apartments where addicts populated the hallways, and often going without food. Yet Whitley Setrakian, Madonna’s roommate at the University of Michigan, where both had studied dance, says: “I’ve never seen her so happy and so sure.”

This self-assurance, ferocious drive and refusal to let circumstances get the better of her echoes through Mary Gabriel’s doorstopper biography. The world is not short of books documenting the life of the queen of pop, though few have attempted it on such a mammoth scale. Coming in at more than 800 pages, the book leaves no stone unturned, and no song, music video, film, TV appearance, friendship or romantic liaison unanalysed, in its quest to understand the woman behind the global icon. This is Our Lady made flesh.

Gabriel, a former Reuters journalist, is the author of 2018’s Ninth Street Women, about five overlooked female artists, including Lee Krasner and Elaine de Kooning, which provides a richly detailed account of the creativity of postwar Manhattan. In A Rebel Life, she delivers a similarly evocative portrait of New York in the late 1970s and early 80s, a grimy, neglected city of chancers and ne’er-do-wells, and a hotbed of art and hedonism.

Those who insist Madonna was purely interested in fame may adjust that view when presented with her campaign to educate the world about HIV and Aids at a time when her contemporaries, not to mention politicians, were either silent or loudly disgusted. A full year before the US government began distributing leaflets about Aids, Madonna – who lost scores of friends to the disease, including the artist Keith Haring – was putting pamphlets about safe sex in brochures at her live shows, risking her reputation and career in the process.

Other perceptions of Madonna – that she “stole” her ideas from queer and black culture, that she needs a man in the studio to make her sound good – are deftly dispatched. On her supposed co-opting of the ballroom scene with her 1990 single Vogue, the author notes that two of the scene’s leading lights, Luis Camacho and José Gutierez, appeared in the song’s video and went on to tour with Madonna.

Gabriel’s writing is unfussy and direct – the approach of a cultural historian rather than fan – while delighting in details such as Madonna getting fired from her job at New York’s Russian Tea Room for wearing fishnets, or sticking her tongue in Al Pacino’s ear after meeting him as a bolshy 20-year-old.

The figure who emerges is inevitably contradictory: serious, funny, generous, inconsiderate, hard-working, restless, blinkered, self-possessed, stubborn. This is a story not just of hit records, reinvention and headline-grabbing controversy, but about how a young working-class woman, traumatised by the early death of her ultra-religious mother, rose to become a cultural colossus and thorn in the side of the conservative right and the Catholic church. Underpinning the narrative are the repressive patriarchal systems that Madonna relentlessly challenged and her unwavering belief in the right to self-expression.

Along with music, that self-expression also found an outlet in film, with decidedly mixed results. There can be no better illustration of Madonna’s doggedness than her acting career, where the howling duds (Who’s That Girl?, Body of Evidence, Swept Away, The Next Best Thing) vastly outnumber the critical and commercial smashes (Desperately Seeking Susan, Evita). Yet on she went, determined to prove her critics wrong.

It’s a mark of Gabriel’s skill that she has managed to wrestle this complex, sprawling, eventful life into a book that rarely flags and conveys its subject’s wider significance without tipping into hagiography. We come to understand Madonna the person as well as Madonna the concept: a woman who, for a generation, embodied female artistic, sexual and financial liberation.

“Just as the daughters of second-wave feminism, who had been taught that they were equal to their brothers, started learning that was not the case, they discovered Madonna,” writes Gabriel. “Her look gave them a rebellious way to express their simmering dissatisfaction and emerging defiance … The message wasn’t the 1970s ‘I Am Woman’ but a 1980s ‘I am free.’ But what did freedom look like? It looked like Madonna.”

To buy a copy for £30.80 go to guardianbookshop.com

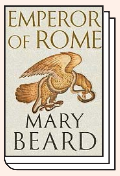
Imperial exploits

The wild behaviour of Rome's ruthless rulers

Kathryn Hughes

CLASSICS

Emperor of Rome
Mary Beard
PROFILE, £30



Any sensible person might think twice before accepting an invitation to dinner from Elagabalus, who briefly ruled over Rome in the third century AD. The emperor loved planting whoopee cushions under his guests, not for the farting noise so much as the fact that it meant they gradually sank lower and lower over the course of the evening. Other fun gambits included releasing so many rose petals from the ceiling that diners were literally smothered to death. Elagabalus would also let drunk guests sleep off their hangovers in a room into which he slyly released tamed wild animals. When the fuddle-heads woke up it was to find a lion peering at them, whereupon they immediately expired from terror.

Diverting though these stories are, can they ever tell us anything substantive about palace life in imperial Rome? For a long time Mary Beard would have said "no". The Cambridge classicist was sceptical about the fallibility of such partisan and hyperbolic accounts written by historians with several axes to grind. (Even the po-faced ones such as Pliny and Cassius Dio weren't above putting the boot in.) Now, though, Beard softens her approach, or perhaps it would be truer to say that she sharpens it to a steely point. While she still maintains that we'll never know what Elagabalus was "like", she nonetheless suggests the wild anecdotes that circulated about him and the 30 other emperors who are the subjects of this enthralling book provide us with an entry point into "the thought world of the Romans".

In the case of Elagabalus the stories about his awfulness give us clues as to what ancient historians and readers (an elite group, admittedly) thought a good emperor should be. More specifically, they illustrate the crucial role that dining played in Roman government. The fact that guests didn't feel able to walk away from their appointment with certain humiliation and possible death tells you everything about the brutal power dynamics underpinning the whole horrible performance. Meanwhile, the topsy-turvy symbolism of tame wild animals and raining rose petals nodded to the emperor's ability to turn nature inside out and upside down, as if he were a god.

The fact that Elagabalus was only 14 when he came to the throne in 218 probably explains the whoopee cushions. But his highly precarious tenure, which lasted just four years until his inevitable assassination, also takes us into another of Beard's key concerns, which is how imperial Rome managed the whole business of succession. The quick answer is not very well. Since primogeniture was not customary, it meant that each time an emperor died it was virtual civil war until a successor emerged. In the case of Elagabalus, he was simply a useful pawn for the army who wanted to get rid of the incumbent who was showing worrying signs of cutting pay and pensions. When the boy-emperor was no longer useful to the military men, he was tipped into the Tiber.

Once a new ruler was installed it became crucial to disguise any discontinuities. This explains why, says Beard in a brilliant chapter, all Roman emperors started to look alike and, to our weary museum-visiting eyes, still do. While each living, breathing ruler had his own physical quirks – Augustus had spots, Caligula had spindly legs and Galba grappled with a hernia – once they were transformed into marble they were smoothed over into a universal ideal of manliness, heroic if somewhat bland.

By the end of this thrilling book we are no nearer to looking the emperor in the eye. But we are much closer to understanding what he was for. Leaning into all the wild stories rather than disregarding them as so much distasteful waste, Beard does a wonderful job of taking us into the maelstrom of fantasy, desire and projection that swirled around the rulers of ancient Rome.

To buy a copy for £25.50 go to guardianbookshop.com

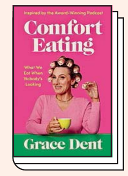
Eat your heart out

Food that packs an emotional punch

Nell Frizzell

FOOD AND DRINK

Comfort Eating
What We Eat When Nobody's Looking
Grace Dent
GUARDIAN FABER, £20



Food is never just food; as any vegetarian who found herself eating a pork pie before a 20-week pregnancy scan will know. Sometimes we eat for pleasure, sometimes we eat for fuel, to feel better, out of boredom, because we're sexually frustrated, sad, or any number of other reasons.

In her new book Grace Dent explores the particular way in which we all, from time to time, eat for comfort. Most importantly, she looks at what we shove, flat-palmed, into our faces when nobody's looking and what this tells us about the human condition. The book draws on the three years Dent has spent as the presenter of Comfort Eating – a Guardian podcast in which the food writer invites celebrity guests to her house to eat the kind of snack that they most certainly wouldn't be serving up to a dinner party. Potato waffles with spaghetti hoops, fried bread sandwiches, beans on toast with crushed Wotsits; starchy, dripping, saturated morsels of pure, vitamin-free delight.

But what Dent really wants to write about, it seems to me, is nostalgia. This is a book shot through with a certain kind of recollection of northern, working-class family life in all its funny and poignant detail. As Dent puts it herself: "There's nothing about life in late twentieth century North-West England that isn't faintly hilarious in print, and I would not swap a single, solitary second."

Chippy teas, gas fires, formidable older female relatives, Saturday morning telly, sliced bread, pyjamas, pebble dash, margarine and wind-whipped beaches smelling of vinegar are everywhere in this book. Because, of course, to talk about comfort food is so often to talk about childhood, home, family and formative experiences. It is no surprise that so many people, when asked to produce an item of comfort food for the show, reach back to a recipe of their mother's, something made by their gran, or the flavours associated with sitting with their dad in the pub. Now that Dent makes her living as a restaurant critic and television personality, firmly ensconced in the London liberal elite, all this might feel a bit put on, except that her affection is tangible, her humour tweezer-sharp and the writing as strong as a Christmas stilton.

If you are a sweet comfort eater, susceptible to the siren song of malted milk biscuits, Angel Delight, rice pudding or golden syrup, you may find Comfort Eating unfairly weighted towards the savoury. But this is Dent's book and she has dominion. The main chapters concern cheese, butter, pasta, bread and potatoes, to which she ascribes a God-like status. In fact, in a quintessential Dent sentence, she writes: "Yes, suffering is a natural part of our earthly existence, and everything we love is fragile, but potatoes make all this tolerable."

This is a book that's not just about comfort but also sadness, suffering and grief; the first series of Comfort Food was recorded just after Dent had nursed her mother during the last weeks of her life, and there is a tinge of heartache to much of what's described here. All of which makes for a particular kind of slightly mournful, slightly camp, slightly wistful philosophy, typified by statements such as: "Life is impermanent, and everything changes. I love tinned pasta because I like to cling to the small things that are constant."

Have I made a single recipe from the book? No (and there are only six). But halfway through reading it, in the grips of a lung infection and the mournful last days of summer, I did find myself thinking about boiled eggs and Marmite toast in a way that felt almost metaphysical.

To buy a copy for £16 go to guardianbookshop.com



Simple pleasures in Comfort Eating

DAVID BURDEN/GETTY

FICTION



Metaphysical speculation ... Karl Ove Knausgård

Double vision

Long-lost siblings are linked across time and space in this expansive novel of ideas from the author of My Struggle

Tanjil Rashid

WILLIAM BLAKE saw a world in a grain of sand, but it took Karl Ove Knausgård to uncover for us the vast galaxies of meaning in cornflakes and pickled herring. Behind the maddeningly meticulous transcription of everyday phenomena in his improbably popular 3,600-page novel series My Struggle lies, to my mind, a latent faith - the faith of a mystic - that everything, however seemingly mundane, has a secret waiting to be unveiled.

That mystical strain is much more explicit in the novels published either side of My Struggle. In A Time to Every Purpose Under Heaven (2008), Knausgård had written about a man obsessed with meeting angels, while 2020's The Morning Star riffs on the devil. In that novel, which inaugurated a new series, supernatural occurrences spook the populace after an unidentified celestial body appears over Norway, the "Morning Star" of the title, known as "Lucifer" in Latin. Should there be any doubt about its diabolical inspiration, the book is 666 pages long and the accompanying bibliography, published online, includes numerous titles on satanism.

With The Wolves of Eternity, the series continues in this vein. It's not a conventional sequel; plot-wise, the only link is the late emergence of the "Morning Star". This establishes that the characters in both novels, while different, do live in the same fictional universe. Moreover, it points the reader to the cosmological intent of the novels, their questioning of humanity's place in the universe and the nature of life on Earth.

Like its predecessor, The Wolves of Eternity comprises an assortment of first-person narratives. But it's less sprawling, more balanced; revolving around two poles. On one hand is Syvert, whom we meet in 1986 as a teenager discharged from Norwegian military service. On the other is Alevtina, a biology professor moving in more intellectual circles in Putin's Russia three decades later.

Syvert can only find work as an undertaker. His widowed mother is fatally ill. Life, as Knausgård readers know well, can be grim in rural Norway. One day he finds a stash of letters to his late father from a long-standing lover in the Soviet Union. The shock takes years to process. Eventually, the adult Syvert writes to the address the letters came from. It soon transpires that he has a long-lost half-sister, Alevtina.

In the 19th century, Russian literature fixated on the theme of duality; doppelgangers abounded. There's something of that in Alevtina and Syvert: of similar age, sharing genetic material but distinguished from each other by a lifetime spent in opposing socioeconomic systems. If chance had determined otherwise, the undertaker, whose business is death, might have been the biologist, studying the beginnings of life. When at last they meet, Alevtina and Syvert are struck by the miracle that the dead survive in their children; Syvert finds in Alevtina a manifestation of his departed father, and in Syvert Alevtina can glimpse the father she never knew.

Despite this occasional poignancy, The Wolves of Eternity is a cerebral book with a peculiarly Russian heaviness. The debt to Dostoevsky is self-consciously hinted at. The letters are translated by a pastor who had learned Russian in order to read Dostoevsky. Instead of a fee, he insists Syvert read Crime and Punishment. As in that novel, long existential debates proliferate.

"Billions of years ago there was nothing, and out of that nothing the entire universe came into being in an enormous explosion?" the pastor asks Syvert. "Out of nothing?" This incredulity towards scientific materialism is foundational to the book. In similar dialogues with Alevtina, Darwinism is disputed. She professes biological reductionism to unconvinced students, but it masks secret doubts. Earlier in her career Alevtina had ascertained that trees were sentient, conscious, communicating beings; freaked out by their "secret languages, codes, strange forms of cognition", she buried the project.

Heaviest of all is the extract from a book by Alevtina's friend Vasya, "The Wolves of Eternity", a treatise on the 19th-century Russian Orthodox visionary Nikolai Fyodorov. He believed it was physically possible to bring the dead back to life (something that does happen in The Morning Star). Fyodorov's ideas feel strangely contemporary - reminiscent of our transhumanist moment, with techno-futurists in the place of loopy theologians. "It's no longer just the Church that talks about eternal life," says Vasya. "Science does too."

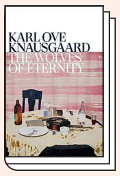
Much of the writing is vintage Knausgård - the style remains flat and free of artifice - but the vision is somewhat different. Way back in My Struggle, Book 1, Knausgård bewailed "a world that after three hundred years of natural science is left without mysteries. Everything is explained, everything is understood, everything lies within humanity's horizons of comprehension."

In The Wolves of Eternity, Knausgård revisits these horizons, only now he speaks of their limits, of the inadequacy of science: "The nature of the mind was something that lay beyond our horizon of understanding. The nature of the universe and the atoms: beyond. Time: beyond. Death: beyond."

Mystery has returned. Such metaphysical speculation can be tedious; we are so unused to it nowadays. Many will decline to endure. At 789 pages, The Wolves of Eternity is big, like the questions it entertains. This is a novel fascinated with undoing death, but perhaps its most interesting resurrection is that of a dormant form: the novel of ideas. Knausgård, master of fiction as an inquiry into the self, now revives fiction as an inquiry into the cosmos, re-enchanting the latter with those beguiling secrets science had stolen from it.

To buy a copy for £22 go to guardianbookshop.com

The Wolves of Eternity
Karl Ove Knausgård, translated by Martin Aitken
HARVILL SECKER, £25



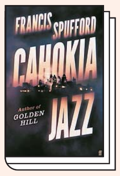
ROBERTO RICCIUTI/GETTY

True detective

Rich noir set in an alternative 20s America

Xan Brooks

Cahokia Jazz
Francis Spufford
FABER, £20



Francis Spufford's fabulous third novel is a piece of pulp fiction disguised as speculative history, or possibly vice versa: the tale plays both sides and switches lanes in a blur. It is set in an alternative 1920s America that is recognisable at the edges and unfamiliar at its core, centred on a First Nations people who have avoided the worst effects of manifest destiny to maintain a toehold of power in the febrile midwest. Where Golden Hill, Spufford's riotous 2016 bestseller, took its lead from the writings of Henry and Sarah Fielding to paint a portrait of nascent 18th-century New York, Cahokia Jazz nods to the hard-boiled prose of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. It rattles through the urban jungle in the manner of a fast-paced dimestore thriller.

Every good detective story is at heart a licence to roam – an excuse to kick open doors and interview all the suspects. So it is with Cahokia Jazz, which is at least as interested in the investigation of its constructed metropolis as it is in solving the murder of lowly, luckless Fred Hopper, who is found dead on a roof with his heart torn from his chest. The evidence suggests a ritual killing. Suspicion immediately falls on the Indigenous community. But Hopper, in addition to his day job as a clerk, was embroiled with the Ku Klux Klan and in debt to a bootlegger, and his death quickly points to a wider political conspiracy. Spufford's invented city – built around the true-life Cahokia Mounds, near a village called St Louis – is a place of blind alleys and dark corners. It's thick with mystery and in thrall to arcane tribal lore. The majority First Nations population holds sway but its position is tenuous: this utopia is revealed to be a tottering house of cards.

Our tour guide and proxy is headstrong, burly Joe Barrow, a mixed-race police detective who was raised as an orphan at a boys' home in Nebraska. Barrow is conveniently new to Cahokia, still learning the ropes, and so it is via his dogged progress that Spufford draws his picture of a complex "mongrel city" in which fiction is grounded in historical fact. It's March 1922, which means that Warren Harding is president, The Birth of a Nation is the KKK's favourite film and Model-T Fords have the run of the road. But the US is here fighting Russia for control of Alaska while the "Mississippi Renaissance" plays as a kind of reverse Great Migration, funnelling African American factory workers back below the Mason-Dixon line.

Reconstruction, it's clear, hasn't bitten so fiercely in these United States, although the result is not so much a melting pot as an unstable pie chart of red, white and black influence. Spufford refers to these factions, respectively, as the *takouma*, *takata* and *taklousa* races. Officially, Barrow is working for the *takata*-dominated police department, but his physical appearance betrays his *takouma* origins and he finds himself increasingly beguiled by Cahokia's First Nations leaders.

An overtly political writer might at this stage be laying the ground for a different breed of drama – a revisionist revengers' tale, perhaps, in which an alliance of Native Americans and former slaves wrest control from their historic white oppressors. Spufford's approach is more playful than prescriptive, more akin to that of an expert model engineer. He builds a world and paints the scenery, provides a physical map and useful background information, to the point where the act of creation becomes a story in itself. Cahokia, unavoidably, is a hotbed of racial tensions. But it primarily serves as a film-noir playground; one that stirs memories of the alternative Alaska in Michael Chabon's The Yiddish Policemen's Union.

Barrow is fascinated by what he describes as "the city's secret self", suspecting that each neighbourhood hides a secret and every resident wears a mask. The detective is as compromised as anyone else. He's moonlighting as a jazz pianist and toiling to protect a wayward fellow officer. He's hopelessly in love with a *takouma* princess and unwilling to believe that she might be implicated in the crime. Cahokia Jazz similarly has its hands full, juggling exposition with action, the conjuring of a world with the demands of a machine-tooled murder mystery. Headlamps light the crime scene; pennies drop with a clunk. But the book's route, although jolting, is rich with incident and colour. Think of the genre plot as a tour bus; a mode of transportation. Spufford rides it through Cahokia and lovingly points out all the sights.

To buy a copy for £17 go to guardianbookshop.com

Comic genius

A woman's life, in kaleidoscopic style

James Smart

GRAPHIC NOVEL
Monica
Daniel Clowes
JONATHAN CAPE, £20



The title suggests that Daniel Clowes's latest is a work of biographical fiction – and, to a degree, it is. A woman called Monica features in most of the nine chapters of this kaleidoscopic graphic novel. Abandoned by her hippy mother, she grows up with her grandparents, builds a career, then abandons it to uncover the truth about her mother's departure – and the secrets of the mysterious cult she may have joined.

Yet Monica changes its colours like a skittish octopus. The chapters don't simply carry the story forward. Instead, they chart the protagonist's life in a wide range of styles – a free-wheeling drama, a ghost story, a rags-to-riches tale, an occult thriller and a retiree romance – broken up by standalone tales of wartime friendship, hitmen, blue-skinned interlopers and cynical artists in which Monica appears only obliquely, if at all. There's no introduction to tell us what to make of it all. The reader, like Monica herself, must play detective.

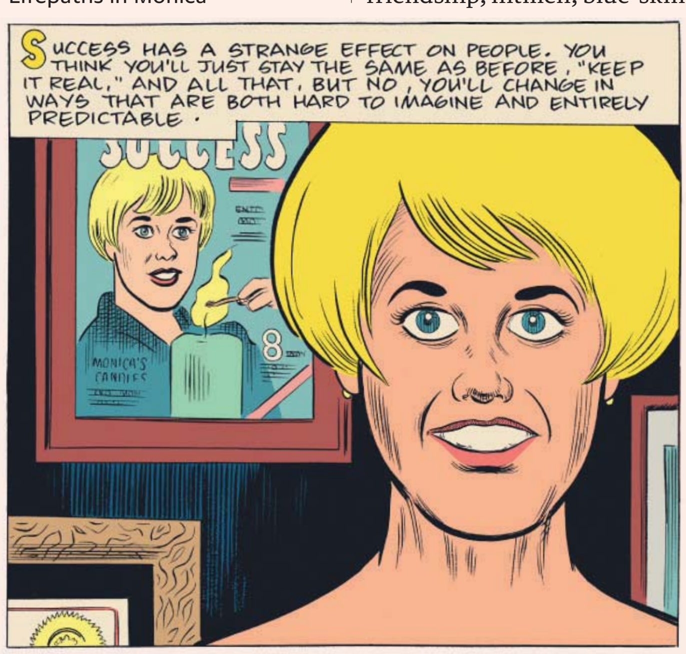
Clowes broke through with the bracingly weird Eightball in the late 1980s, and has become one of the most lauded figures in comics, best known for Ghost World and David Boring; fans will need little excuse to fling themselves into this genre-hopping work. But casual readers shouldn't fret. Monica's story, despite being told in themed fragments, is full of drama. Ritual sacrifices rub up against domestic arguments, cars fly headlong off roads, a whale is torn by lampreys and a cult roots out a traitor in its midst as Monica probes deeper into her past.

Clowes is a skilled evoker of time and place, and his enthusiasm for the styles he adopts helps the episodes – which move broadly from the 1960s to the present – to flow. Visual details and sparky writing set each scene with colourful concision, while Clowes uses genre conventions to shine shifting light on the action. In the chapter Pretty Penny, Monica's mother's destructive tangle of relationships is illustrated with the bright colours and flower motifs of teen romance. The looming folk horror of The Glow Infernal renders deserted streets and dark forests with stately menace: at one point an axe rests in a neck like a book on a shelf. Elsewhere, panels evoke William Hogarth and zombie mobs. Monica explores one woman's journey, but you could argue that this pulpy, episodic book is really about comics themselves. Connections and echoes abound. People seen in squats or head shops reappear decades later in another episode. Monica's dead grandfather calls out from a portable radio, while hummingbirds and tree spirits flit between chapters.

Monica's search for her mother apparently leads to a cult mastermind and a powerful ancient curse. The book begins with a two-page visual gallery that takes us past dinosaurs, the crucifixion and the American civil war to the present day, suggesting her quest may be an equally pivotal moment in our history. Yet Monica's discoveries are built from her own hazy memories and the recollections of ageing men and women. Is she writing history, or spinning a yarn?

If Monica is seeking to step outside reality, she is not the only one. In these pages hippies, feminists, cultists and artists all scrabble to escape or transform the hard, baffling world they inhabit. Even Penny's upstanding first boyfriend ends up in a house coated with "thick sediment … like a grime of madness", conspiracy tracts piled up around him. Both Monica and Penny, like many of Clowes's characters, are compulsively drawn to choices that pull them from mundane

Lifepaths in Monica



DANIEL CLOWES

contentment into stranger waters.

The dark tale that results is a thrilling read. Clowes's refusal to commit to a single narrative style or version of the truth means that this is not a book you finish with a happy sense of closure. Rather, it nags at you to flick through the pages one more time, heading down rabbit holes of your own as you realise that this rich, clever work has shifted its shape once again.

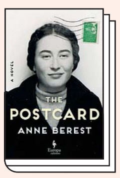
To buy a copy for £17.60 go to guardianbookshop.com

After Auschwitz

An autofictional tale of family survival

Rachel Seiffert

The Postcard
Anne Berest, translated by Tina Kover
EUROPA, £18.99



Anne Berest's work of autofiction, a bestseller in France and a finalist for the Prix Goncourt, opens on a snowy Paris morning in 2003. The protagonist's mother, Léila, steps outside for her first cigarette of the day, only to find a mysterious postcard in the mailbox. On it are four names: Ephraim, Emma, Noémie, Jacques. Her grandfather, grandmother, aunt and uncle - all killed at Auschwitz. No signature, no explanation. "Who could have sent me this terrible thing?"

For Léila, the postcard is a threat, a provocation. For Anne, it poses a question: why does she know so little about those ancestors? Her quest to find the sender will open rifts between mother and daughter; it will also unearth the family's origin story. Their early years of wandering; their fate under Vichy France and the Nazis; the risks her grandparents undertook in the Resistance. And then afterwards, the pain of survival; the long reach of the Holocaust through the generations. Every page is gripping, revelatory.

The first half of the book is Ephraim and Emma's. One an engineer, the other a pianist, both idealists, the Rabinovitches are married in Moscow in 1919. But in the violent aftermath of revolution, they must flee with their first born, Myriam, through the forests to cross the Latvian border. The times are tumultuous, especially if you are Jewish, and the growing family endure many further journeys, taking Myriam and her baby sister Noémi from Riga to Palestine and eventually to Paris. But Ephraim is an optimist: in France, he applies for citizenship, and settles his wife and children in the town of Les Forges. They make friends, name their youngest Jacques, and build a smallholding to sustain themselves. But then come the Nazis.

The second half of the book is Myriam's - the only one of the family of five to escape deportation. When the police come to take Noémi and Jacques to "work" for the Germans, she is not on the list, and Ephraim acts on instinct, insisting she hide. Myriam is saved again by her marriage to Vicente - a fellow Parisian student and one of artist Francis Picabia's many children. Picabia's family smuggle Myriam into Free France in the boot of a car along with the artist Jean Arp. In Provence, and alone after Vicente is imprisoned, Myriam begins work for the Resistance, translating radio reports, hiding fugitives, even while pregnant.

After the war's end, her beloved family is not among the returners streaming into Paris, but she cannot give up. Leaving her baby in the care of others, Myriam works with survivors, even travelling to Germany to look for her lost. The restlessness will never leave her. It's passed to her daughter, the chain-smoking Léila, and to her grandchild. Anne is possessed by the postcard - who sent it? why? - and her search brings so much more to light.

Her parents told her little of her Rabinovitch family, and even less of their faith. They hoped to free her of history's weight: for them, being Jewish had been burdensome, dangerous, and besides, "God had died in the death camps". Instead of liberating Anne, though, it leaves her in a double bind. When she finds love in her 40s with Georges, who is observant, his friends are wary, one accusing her over a Pesach dinner of being Jewish "only when it suits". At the same time, her young daughter is told by her schoolmates that "we don't like Jews here", and when Anne reports this to the headmaster, he coolly brushes it off.

For Anne, there is a further complexity: she is a child of survivors. She tells Georges that, sometimes, "the only thing I belong to is my mother's pain. That's my community. Made up of two living people and several million dead." Their love provides belonging, though, and her long search will eventually bring clarity, even if much of it is sore.

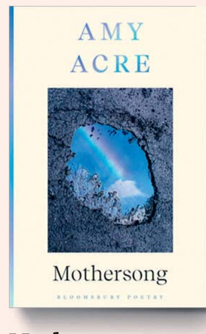
And who sent the postcard? Well, you must read and find out. Impeccably researched and deftly structured, the book's form allows Berest to combine the heft of lived experience with the drive of narrative fiction - and the personal element lays bare how very live these questions still are. As Berest has it, this is "an old story, which is also a very new story". It is a work of rare grace and importance.

To buy a copy for £16.71 go to guardianbookshop.com

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Poetry

Meditations on motherhood; visions of East Germany's lost villages; fiery portraits of punk; and interrogations of the infinite. *By Philip Terry*



Mothersong
Amy Acre
BLOOMSBURY, £9.99

Mothersong is indeed a book about motherhood; there are poems about postnatal anxiety and organ prolapse. But there's a more curious book here too, and a more expansive one, which puts the word "mother" through the mincer, and by doing so takes us to unexpected places: Egyptian mummies, displaced people finding mother figures in restaurant owners, and excursions into space. Taking risks - "high / and wild on a rope / that you'll never / stop crossing" - is central, and the best poems embrace this formally, along with the possibility that the poem might fall off the tightrope. See Also is made out of dictionary definitions, and The Year of the Horse is composed using words that first "birthed" in 1990: "Twentysomethings geeked out over the World Wide Web / while polyamorous malware circled in hoodies."

Pitch & Glint
Lutz Seiler, translated by Stefan Tobler
AND OTHER STORIES, £14.99

Meticulously translated from German, these poems create an inimitable sound world where everything is muted as if beneath a blanket of snow, whispering, sizzling, crackling. The crackling, we realise with a sense of shock, is radioactive uranium, as Seiler hauntingly describes a lost rural East Germany, where villages disappear as they collapse into the uranium mines beneath their streets. Seiler's subject is the lost generation who inhabit these "utterly damned" villages: we see abject miners drowning their sorrows with "spoilheap glow", Kafkaesque scenes where children metamorphose into bugs, and Seiler's father, Crusoe, as he returns home with his "Geiger counter heart". As Seiler remarks, "little here leads to the poem", but this shadowy world has a strange, muted poetry, where incipient violence is made palpable with swerves into the surreal.

The Coming Thing
Martina Evans
CARCANET, £12.99

It's set in the 1980s Cork punk scene, and "the coming thing" refers both to the arrival of computers and to narrator Imelda's looming experience of abortion in mainland Britain. Meanwhile, we are immersed in Irish punk, painted in all its filth, fun and fury: pills, seances, Specials gigs, bondage trousers, existentialists and Bulmers. What the Pogues did to folk music, Evans does to the sonnet, creating furious narrative bursts with the energy of three-minute punk songs. I'll be giving this book to all my friends, and if Carcanet bring it out on vomit-coloured vinyl, I'll do it all over again. Buy it or, better, steal it.



Infinite in Finite
Andrew Wynn Owen
CARCANET, £12.99

Underpinning this collection is the history of western philosophy. Owen focuses primarily on the senses: "Optical process, not hallucination, / Is how I gauge events." The approach leads to some exhilarating moments of instantiation where philosophical concepts are embodied in the grain of the writing, such as this view of an owl: "A chalky tussle longbowed through the blank / And you said, 'That's an owl!'" This is precision-engineered rhymed verse. At first glance it looks old-fashioned, but we soon realise that rhyme itself operates as a limit, a finite, which can paradoxically lead to an infinite, as it echoes into the distance. It is this that enables Owen to find the infinite not in a god, but in that which we recognise through the senses: love, animals, clouds, rewilding, and in the making that is poetry and art.

THE BOOKS OF MY LIFE

Paul Lynch

The Irish author on the poetry that rewired his brain, and the healing powers of Robinson Crusoe



My earliest reading memory
Sitting on the floor with my mother, reading word cards cut out from an All Bran box. The Ladybird classics soon followed. I recently found a battered copy of The Golden Goose by the Brothers Grimm and read it to my kids. My word, how times have changed. A character called Simpleton? Cake and a bottle of wine for a midday meal? (Only on holidays, mind you.)

My favourite book growing up
I was once at a drinks reception in an embassy and a towering venerable poet sidled over. "So who are your formative influences?" he asked. I met him with a half-serious look and said, "The Hardy Boys". The great brow came down and his eyes closed. There was silence for a moment. "Ah," he said, "Thomas Hardy!" I meant what I said, though. Aged nine to 10, I read all 85 Hardy Boys books, except for one, The House on the Cliff, which could not be had in 1980s rural Donegal.

The book that changed me as a teenager
Thomas Hardy, of course, was soon to come. At 16, I read The Mayor of Casterbridge for school and sat on the bed and bawled when Michael Henchard met his desolate end. What sweet suffering! I've been chasing the hit ever since.

The book that made me want to be a writer
It started with Soundings, a beloved poetry anthology on the Irish Leaving Certificate. Gerard Manley Hopkins rewired my brain. A pal and I used to walk the corridors bellowing his verse: "No worst, there is none!" and so on. The overwrought poetry soon followed.

The book I could never read again
At 18, I got more than halfway through Joseph Heller's Something Happened. I loved it but then put the book down, musing: "I really don't need to know this mid-life stuff." Now that I know this mid-life stuff for myself, I don't want to go anywhere near it.

The author I came back to
I got Virginia Woolf wrong at university. I just could not understand the fuss. Then I read her again in my late 30s and realised I was being an ass. She is very dear to me now.

The book I reread
I was a subeditor and then a film critic for the Sunday Tribune through my 20s. One day, a sub handed me a book that changed my life. Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo is a high peak of Latin American literature – a shapeshifting classic that has the purity of myth.

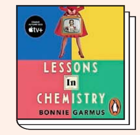
The book I discovered later in life
Elsa Morante's 1957 Neapolitan novel Arturo's Island, newly translated by Ann Goldstein, is worthy of being a world classic. The boy in the tale has the ineffable charm of a Defoe narrator, with oceanic depths quaking under the surface.

My comfort read
Speaking of Daniel Defoe, I was met with major illness last year and Robinson Crusoe was the only novel I wanted to read. I found myself on a most unexpected island, aged 45, and in recovery after surgery I needed to hear that beguiling voice again, that optimism in the face of the void.

Paul Lynch's Prophet Song, shortlisted for the Booker prize, is published by Oneworld.

Audiobook of the week

Lessons in Chemistry
Bonnie Garmus
PENGUIN AUDIO, 11HR 56MIN

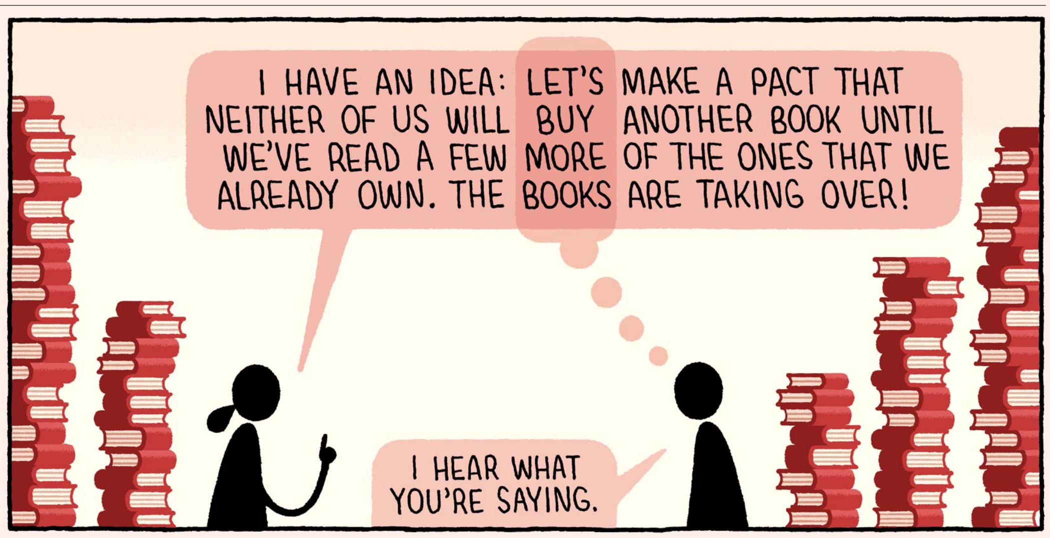


Elizabeth Zott is a research scientist trying to make her way in a man's world. It's 1952, a time when women are expected to give up their careers to get married and have children. But Elizabeth isn't content having her work sidelined – or, worse still, stolen – by her male colleagues at California's Hastings Research Institute, so she resolves to keep working and never get married. When she falls in love with Calvin Evans, a Nobel-nominated chemist, she declines his marriage proposal but agrees to move in with him and get a dog.

Bonnie Garmus's smart and funny feminist fable – a TV adaptation of which arrives this month on Apple TV+ starring Brie Larson – is read by the British actor Miranda Raison, who delights in Elizabeth's pithy observations on the many ways women are undermined by men. A charismatic heroine determined to live life on her terms, Elizabeth must find ever more ingenious ways to make a living and challenge the status quo.

Fast-forward to the early 60s and Calvin is dead, Elizabeth a single parent to their precocious daughter Madeline. She is also, improbably, a TV star. Having been fired from her research job for being pregnant and unmarried, she is now hosting a series where she tutors housewives in home-cooking while introducing science and liberal politics by stealth. Moving between comedy and tragedy, Lessons in Chemistry is a powerful portrait of a woman battling misogyny and visiting revenge on those who wish to silence her. *Fiona Sturges*

Tom Gauld



Further listening

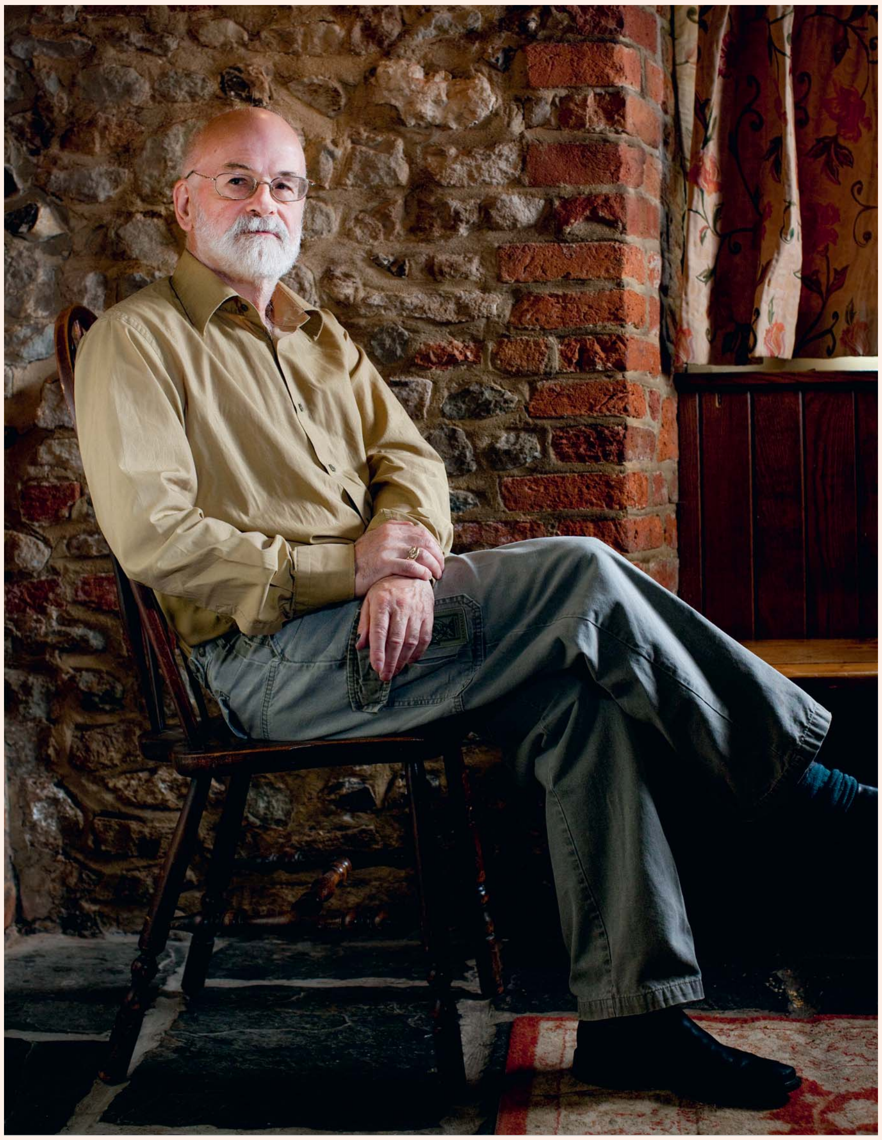
Still Life
Sarah Winman
4TH ESTATE, 14HR 55MIN
A young soldier named Ulysses meets Evelyn, a sixtysomething art historian, by chance in a Tuscan bomb shelter during the second world war in this sweeping novel. Read by the author.

A Death in the Parish
Richard Coles
WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON, 8HR 25MIN
Coles reads the second book in his Canon Clement series, which brings a new vicar, and a ritualistic killing, to the village of Champton St Mary.

BASSO CANNARSA

Magic touch

It's 40 years since Terry Pratchett's first Discworld novel hit the shelves. As newly unearthed short stories are published, fans and friends celebrate his enduring legacy. *By Sam Jordison*



DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

"Of all the dead authors in the world, Terry Pratchett is the most alive," said John Lloyd at the author's memorial in 2015. This sentiment remains as true now, 40 years after the publication of Pratchett's first Discworld novel, The Colour of Magic. The anniversary has been commemorated in a set of illustrated Royal Mail stamps. There's been a show dedicated to Pratchett at the Edinburgh fringe. A Kickstarter for a graphic novel adaptation of Good Omens, the book he co-wrote with Neil Gaiman, became the number one comics campaign in Kickstarter history, bringing in more than £2.4m; a second series of the TV adaptation was also released.

All this would make 2023 an impressive year by any writer's standards - but happened in the month of August alone. The big event comes this month, with the publication of A Stroke of the Pen, a collection of rediscovered early stories. This past year also brought an animated adaptation of Pratchett's children's novel The Amazing Maurice, and a new set of Discworld audiobooks.

These recordings saw an attempt to drag Pratchett into our contemporary culture wars. The Daily Telegraph reported that A'Tuin, the giant interplanetary turtle that carries the Discworld on its back, had been brought "thudding back down to earth" because of a warning on the audiobooks: "The first book in the Discworld series - The Colour of Magic - was published in 1983. Some elements of the Discworld universe may reflect this."

Pratchett, in spite of his undeniable culpability when it comes to the fact of being alive in 1983, is an unusual target for this kind of story. After all, this was a writer who first made his name satirising the objectionable excesses of an earlier generation of fantasy writers.

"Terry Pratchett managed to combine all of the best parts of the classic swords and sorcery writers, while stripping out the objectionable relics of their period - the racism and misogyny particularly," says fantasy author Alex Pheby. "What he put in place of the bad stuff was humour, and a progressive, inclusive treatment of a wide variety of characters. I found that a pretty unbeatable mix, and it's one that's really secured his legacy."

It's true that Pratchett has escaped the opprobrium often directed towards writers in that difficult period around the end of their careers - but then he was never a critical darling. "He's a complete amateur," the poet Tom Paulin famously declared on BBC2's Late Review programme when Pratchett was on his 17th novel in the multimillion-selling Discworld series. "He doesn't even write in chapters."

Not that Pratchett was universally disparaged: the critics who actually read his books tended to like them. When AS Byatt reviewed Thief of Time, she said it deserved to win the Booker prize. Of course, Pratchett never got a look in. "Thank goodness," he said, "because I think my earnings would have gone down considerably if I suddenly got literary credibility." He also joked that when he was given an OBE for services to literature, those services "consisted of refraining from trying to write any".

'He combined all the best parts of swords and sorcery, while stripping out the objectionable relics of their period'

But here, for once, he was wrong. It's the literary quality of his work that has ensured his continuing popularity. "Pratchett's lines stay with you," says journalist and fan Helen Lewis. "I first read him as a teenager and, a quarter of a century on, he is still in my brain all the time. Not just his jokes and wordplay, but the way he saw the world - humane, not dogmatic, amused and amusing."

As Lewis also points out, revisiting the Discworld often has surprising contemporary resonance: "There's so much in Pratchett's novels that feels more relevant today than ever. He deals with eugenics and the idea of 'lesser races', gun control, sexism, religious fundamentalism, crumbling local government infrastructure ... "

The list goes on. My own most recent Pratchett reread was Making Money, a novel that has often been highlighted as an example of Pratchett's perspicacity, thanks to its superb depictions of the precarious unreality of banking systems. This subject gained a lot of currency among cultural commentators following the banking crisis in 2008; the difference between Pratchett and all the other analysts was that his ideas were published in 2007 - a year *before* the crash.

When I read Making Money this summer, I was even more struck by his portrayal of ancient clay golems beginning to develop independent intelligence after ingesting huge quantities of written material. Had Pratchett predicted ChatGPT?

I put this idea to Rob Wilkins, personal assistant to Terry until Alzheimer's carried him away in 2015 and now the head of the Pratchett literary estate, but he wasn't convinced. "I don't think he could have foreseen the way in which artificial intelligence is integrating itself so quickly into our everyday lives."

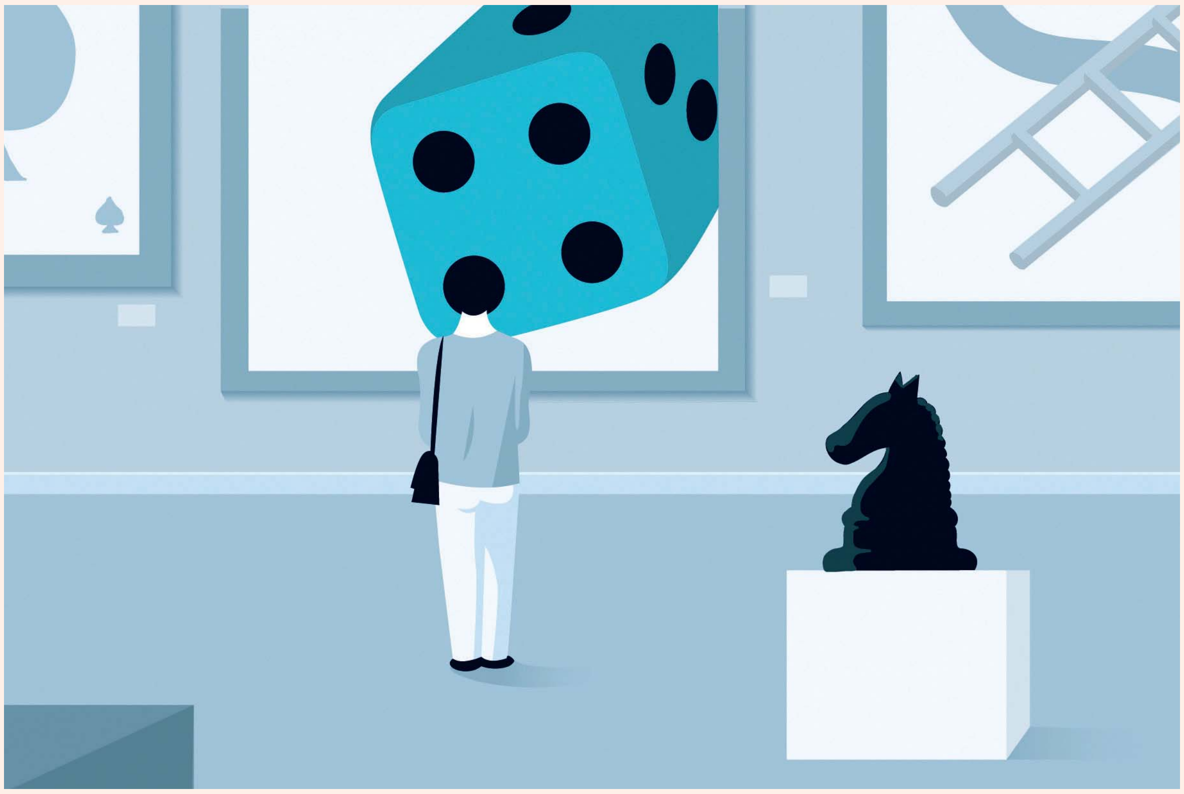
I may have got carried away. It's so easy to get lost in the alternative reality of the Discworld that it feels as though Pratchett is addressing our most immediate concerns. "He is, of course, writing about us," said Byatt, but that doesn't necessarily make him a prophet.

"Making Money and Terry's prediction of the banking crash is always held up as one of the great examples of how he predicted the future," says Wilkins, "but I actually believe that it had more to do with his ability to read and predict the human condition and our own ghastly ability to continually cock things up."

That understanding, as much as anything, may help to explain his enduring power. But Wilkins does think there is some insight to be gained from thinking about Pratchett and AI. "Terry's words and phrases were so beautifully polished," he says, "that I would like to believe he would immediately see through any computer-generated prose. Even when he had become very unwell, he could still look out through the haze of Alzheimer's and immediately spot any attempt by me to slip my own words under the wire. Dreaming up a future that seemed out of our grasp wasn't all that hard for Terry Pratchett. He would, however, remain livid at the continued wait for the elusive hoverboard from Back to the Future."

Terry Pratchett's A Stroke of the Pen will be published by Doubleday on Tuesday.


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THE BIG IDEA

Is there such a thing as the perfect game?

Strategy and unpredictability are a winning combination – as long as the rules are simple, writes *Marcus du Sautoy*

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, my sister and I loved playing snakes and ladders. I think we both believed that we were somehow responsible for sending each other down the snakes, or for victoriously climbing a ladder. Now, of course, I know that we were totally at the mercy of the randomness of the dice. We had no real influence over our own successes or failures.

I had also assumed that this game was a western creation – but my recent travels in India revealed that it has different origins, and an unexpected spiritual aspect. According to one interpretation it was used as a tool for teaching about the quest for liberation from the vicissitudes of karma and the hindrances of passion. Kindness to others is rewarded by a ladder. Drunkenness by a snake. The winning square represents *moksha* – freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth. Others have seen it as a representation of destiny – the notion that the course of your life is beyond your control, with good and ill fortune determined by impersonal forces.

This fatalistic view of life it captures is one reason why, ultimately, snakes and ladders is a very unsatisfying experience. So what makes a really good game? Ideally it involves an element of agency, so that you are able to express yourself through playing it. In India games are traditionally used at weddings to provide a structured way for a newlywed couple to get to know each other, especially when the marriage has been arranged. They are an opportunity for shared experience – like a kind of dance with your opponent. In a good game, just as in a dance, you determine your moves and your opponent interprets them.

Irving Finkel, assistant keeper of ancient Mesopotamian script, languages and cultures at the British Museum, has speculated that the fact games sharpen our mind-reading skills – forcing us to put ourselves in our opponent's shoes – is why they have been such an enduring feature of culture. He even goes so far as to suggest that they developed in tandem with human consciousness. Imagining how someone else might move and planning accordingly provided a tool to explore the inner lives of others, an essential skill for a social animal. Finkel is responsible for decoding the rules behind one of the very first board games in recorded history: the 4,500-year-old Royal Game of Ur, which was rediscovered during excavations in the 1920s. Players compete to race pieces around the board using pyramid-shaped dice.

Snakes and ladders, as we've seen, doesn't provide any kind of window into other people's thinking. So perhaps games of pure strategy like Go or chess represent ludic perfection. Surprisingly, it turns out that chess, which also has its origins in India, originally involved the roll of a dice to determine which piece you were allowed to move. When gambling and games of chance were outlawed in Hindu culture, players found a way to evade censure by simply taking away the dice and deciding for themselves what to move, making success about intellect and nothing more.

Although chess and Go are beautiful games, their reliance on strategy means they suffer from a different sort of problem. Unless players are perfectly matched, the outcome can be rather predictable. In the perfect game, you should still be in with a shot of winning even if you're not as practised as your opponent. An element of uncertainty is required. We decide to play because there is a chance either of us can beat the other. If we know in advance how things will end, things aren't very interesting. Garry Kasparov against Donald Trump would not be a match that had people on the edge of their seats.

So the ideal is to weave an element of strategy together with unpredictability – the source of which has to be something like the roll of a dice or the deal of a hand of cards. Indeed, ensuring this uncertainty lasts for as long as possible is a key component in game design. Monopoly suffers as a game precisely because once someone has gained the upper hand, it's hard to turn the tables.

Another key component is simple rules that allow you to get the hang of things quickly. My family have a very short attention span for my explanations of how to play. If they haven't got it within two minutes, I've lost them. Yet that simplicity has to also give rise to multiple possible outcomes – something which makes a game worth returning to again and again.

Where does that leave us in our quest for the perfect game? If I was going to have to pick one, I would choose backgammon. It is full of drama, twists and turns. The lead can shift dramatically with a roll of the dice. As with the mathematics of chaos, small changes can send things in completely new directions. A beginner has the ability to beat an expert, but even when the dice seem against you, strategic play can still give you the upper hand. The rules couldn't be simpler, and yet, in each of the thousands of matches I've played, the story is different every time. And as well as being one of the most perfect games, it is also one of humanity's most ancient – able to trace its origins back to the game Finkel decoded at the British Museum.

Ultimately, of course, the perfect game – like the perfect book – is a question of taste. Some love giving up control, letting the dice decide their fate. Others prefer to retain a sense of agency and relish honing the most effective strategy. Tell me the game you play and I'll tell you who you are.

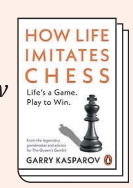
Marcus du Sautoy is Simonyi professor for the public understanding of science at Oxford. His book Around the World in 80 Games: A Mathematician Unlocks the Secrets of the Greatest Games (4th Estate) will be published on Thursday.

Further reading
Three books for a deeper dive

Seven Games
Oliver Roeder
WW NORTON & CO, £13.99



How Life Imitates Chess
Garry Kasparov
CORNERSTONE, £10.99



The Monopolists
Mary Pilon
BLOOMSBURY, £10.39

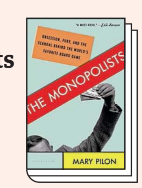
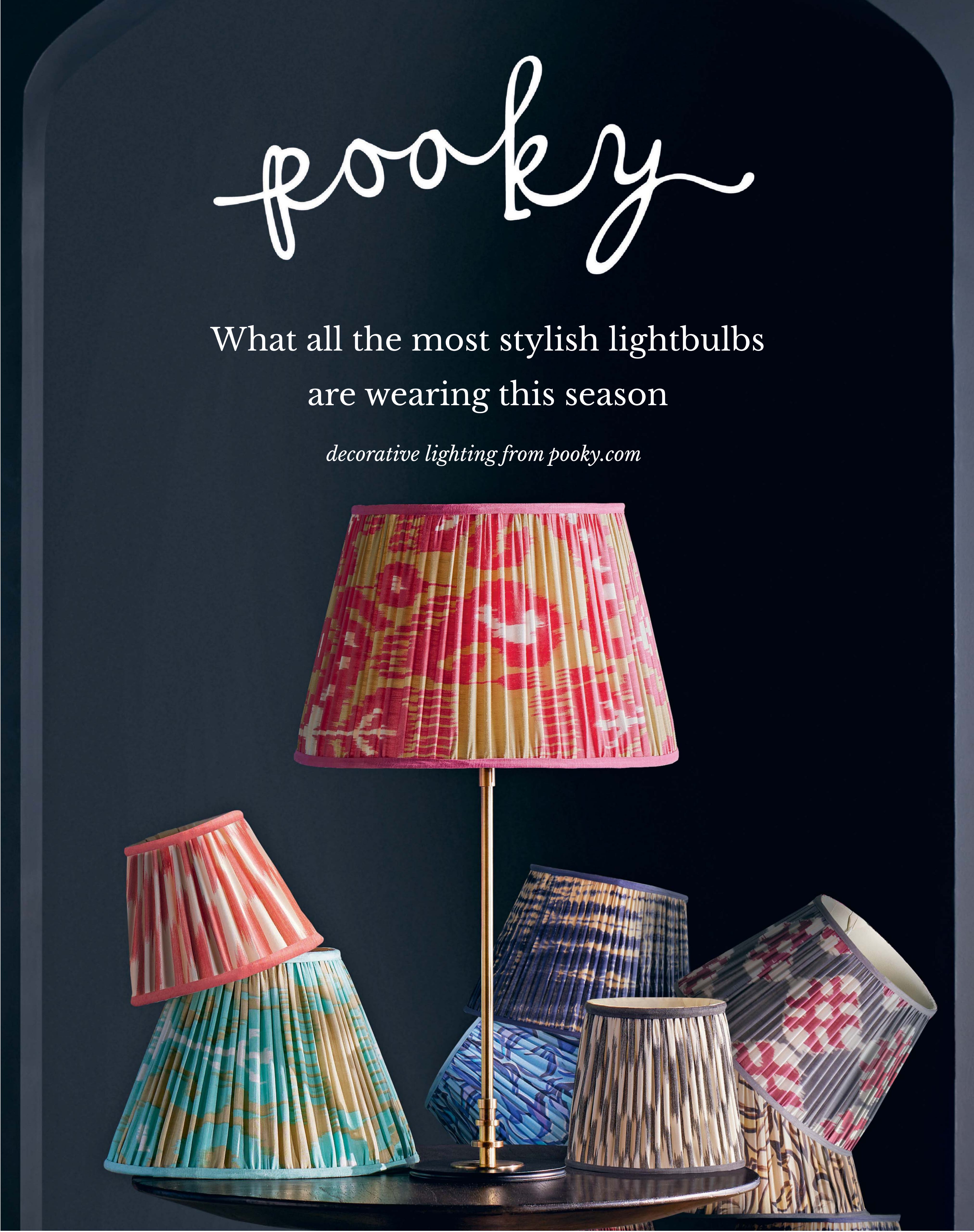


Illustration: Elia Barbieri


pooky
What all the most stylish lightbulbs
are wearing this season
decorative lighting from pooky.com



LIFESTYLE

DAMAGE CONTROL

Spills, muddy pets and kids with crayons: how to everything-proof your home

SEX
We like to plan our sessions with care
PAGE 67

STYLE
Are your clothes a tight or loose fit?
PAGE 70

TRAVEL
Unusual city breaks from Faro to Freiburg
PAGE 80-85

Scuffed walls, stained taps, and claw marks on the sofa – our homes can take quite a pounding. Here's how to protect them from the ravages of daily life

Words: Lucy Pavia



Upholstery: right fabric, right place
Always factor durability as well as aesthetics into your fabric choices, says upholsterer and TV presenter Micaela Sharp: "Ideally [for a chair or sofa] pick something with a high Martindale count" – the number of rubs a fabric can take before a thread breaks. "I'd recommend over 35,000, but a lot of domestic fabrics now go up to 200,000, like stain-resistant velvets, which are particularly durable."

Embroidered fabrics are less suitable for seating as they're more likely to fray, says Sharp, but work well on a headboard, as the texture disguises marks left by hair products, which a "flatter" fabric might show up. Otherwise, a well-placed pattern can hide a multitude of sins: "A small print on a sofa is not only much more forgiving of stains, it's actually lighter on the eye than a big, single block of colour," she says.

Luxury outdoor performance fabrics such as those from Perennials (perennialsfabrics.com) – designed to withstand everything from rainstorms to red wine stains – are becoming more popular for indoor upholstery, but they're expensive, so Sharp suggests a more affordable stain-resistant fabric from a brand such as Linwood. The fabrics have some synthetic element, but brands such as Camira (camiragroup.com), which uses recycled ocean plastics, or Weaver Green (weavergreen.com), whose washable rugs are made from single-use plastic bottles, help reduce the environmental impact.

Among natural fibres, wool is a great option for upholstery, says interior designer Nicola Harding. "The lanolin in it repels water, which makes it harder to stain." For a heavy-use sofa, Harding also loves

Cover image: Jose Luis Pelaez/Getty Images. Main image: Debra Bardowicks



corduroy – "a good, robust, family friendly material" – layered with cushions and rugs to protect from sticky hands and muddy paws. Try Tinsmiths, which stocks earthy, autumnal shades (tinsmiths.co.uk).

For light-coloured curtains add a dark or patterned border along the leading edge (the bit you pull) to prevent finger marks: "Sewing this on to shop-bought drapes will also give a more bespoke look," says Sharp.

Furniture: older is often better

Older furniture was not only made to last, but designed to be repaired, says Isobel Gordon, founder of antique furniture sourcing company, Origo House. It's also more forgiving in a house packed with kids and pets. With some hunting around you can pick up a bargain: "Just make sure you check for woodworm, sticking drawers, hidden cracks or wobbles," says Gordon. Some imperfections are part of the charm: "In a recent project, we asked the restorer to keep a peace sign scribbled on the top of a mid-century oak chest of drawers, as it seemed part of its story."

Bathrooms: save on sinks, spend on taps

Interior designer Ali Childs says decent taps are where your bathroom budget should go: "Even some high-end brands are guilty of making ones that break easily. Visit a showroom to test the function and weight of a tap before buying." Money can be saved on the bath and basin, which can be bought secondhand or re-enamelled. She also suggests saving on expensive and often cheaply made vanity units by repurposing something vintage: "We've found old marble-topped washstands, which a stone yard can cut a sink hole in for very little money." A solid wood piece is then easier to sand or repaint than laminated off-the-peg pieces, which "you can't do much to fix when it peels and cracks".

Tiles may be the most obvious choice for bathroom walls, but painted tongue and groove panelling can be cheaper and just as hard-wearing, provided you opt for a waterproof MDF, says Childs. For her wet room, fashion designer and interiors aficionado Kate Halfpenny lined the shower wall with horizontal shiplap sprayed with car paint by a local garage: "It's a super-durable finish and it doesn't mark like tiles or glass."

Bathrooms are especially costly to redecorate, so be wary of following trends, like black taps and shower heads, which many plumbers caution against, as they can show up white water marks.

Kitchens: think outside the kitchen shop

If you're designing a kitchen from scratch, consider how many built-in units you actually need, says Harding: "A kitchen maker is motivated to sell you as much cabinetry as possible, but a solid wood cupboard will often cost less and be better made."

Halfpenny recommends choosing a darker colour for your units in a paint which is easy to use for touch-ups: "I have a chocolate eggshell shade from Little Greene on mine and it is so forgiving." She also recommends handles in an unlacquered brass, which develop a lovely patina with use so they look better over time. One thing to avoid? "A stainless steel fridge – ours is constantly covered in grubby fingerprints."

Quartz is the most hard-wearing choice for a worktop, says Childs, but if that's out of budget a compact laminate is tougher than chipboard-filled, and far cheaper than stone. Wooden worktops are often dismissed as high maintenance, says Harding, but a stone surround for your sink area can prevent water damage. "Breaking up the worktop in this way will also make the kitchen look more bespoke."

Avoid wood flooring in a kitchen if you have dogs and kids, says Riley Uggla of lifestyle platform The Condo (thecondo.studio): "It absorbs grease and moisture and it's harder to maintain – porcelain or stone is more practical." Other kid-friendly kitchen flooring options are vinyl ("make a feature of it with a chequerboard pattern," says Childs) or marmoleum, a durable and environment-friendly version of lino made from 97% natural materials.

Paint: do your research

Every paint will show some wear and tear, the question is how wipeable and washable it is, says Farrow & Ball colour consultant Patrick O'Donnell. "A general rule of thumb is the higher the sheen of paint, the tougher the finish (so a gloss is generally strongest) but so many companies are now making resilient matt finishes it's worth doing your research." Don't assume a darker shade will hide everything – "pale tones show up scuffs but dark ones can show up dust," says O'Donnell. "The safest bet is probably a mid-based neutral," he says, but don't be slavishly practical. Instead, have fun with wall-protecting design details, like painting up to chair rail height in full gloss, then adding a matt paint in the same colour above.

Uggla also recommends trying out a limewash finish for high-traffic areas: "It has so much more texture than a flat paint, and the natural lines can be great for masking scuffs."

Don't assume a darker shade will hide everything. The safest bet is probably a mid-based neutral



Pets: lose the ugly sofa towel

Be realistic about your sofa colour if you have dogs: a pale colour will show up muddy paw prints, so add something tasteful the pooch can sit on. "Toast does some lovely blankets," says Harding. "I put sheepskins on sofas for the dogs," says Halfpenny. "They look nice and the dirt brushes right off."

She suggests avoiding sisal if you have cats – "it's basically what scratching posts are made of"; the same goes for carpets with a generous loop pile. Vinyl or laminate floors are more hard-wearing than wood if you're worried about claw scratches, says Childs (Karndean is popular with dog-owners), and be realistic about your rug choices to prevent heartbreak: "One of our clients had a silk bamboo rug that the dog peed on and they never got the stain out." Brands such as Ruggable offer tasteful, pet-inspired floor coverings which can be bunged in the washing machine.

Steal tips from hotels and holiday lets

Hotels are good places to look for design ideas that can take a hammering. Harding, whose projects include the Rose in Deal and London's Beaverbrook Town House, says that in hotels she often uses wooden floors with a band-sawn finish as "the slightly rougher look is much more forgiving of scratches and marks".

She also recommends synthetic sisal (see The Unnatural Flooring Company), which looks like the real thing but is so tough it can be scrubbed with bleach. "I used a waterproof version in the bathrooms of the Rose," Harding adds. "It's softer on the feet and easier to lay than tiles, which can break if the surface isn't totally flat."

Half-height panelling in a gloss paint is another hotel trick that Harding loves: "We did it in the bedrooms at Beaverbrook Town House – it gives everything a lustre and feels glamorous while being very hard-wearing."

To protect against guest spills, in one hotel project Ali Childs reupholstered the cushions of a secondhand sofa in a plain spill-proof material – outdoor fabrics work well – and saved a beautiful but less practical fabric for the back, while for another commercial holiday let she had two sets of loose sofa covers made by Bemz for an Ikea couch, so they could be washed when needed: "You could have some made to protect your home sofa from dogs and kids, then whip it off before guests arrive."

MATCHMAKING GUARDIAN READERS SINCE 2009

‘We got on the same train home - but he was going the wrong way’

Blind Date



Jake
31, teacher

What were you hoping for?
A fun evening with free drinks.

First impressions?
Nice. Independent kind of style.

What did you talk about?
Pretty much everything. Being naked on Arthur’s Seat. Skinny dipping. The UK class system. Our families.

Most awkward moment?
There weren’t many. At one point she called a hill a mountain and I laughed. She did too, but she said it was because of being multilingual so I felt a bit bad for laughing.

Good table manners?
Yeah, although it’s not something I’d be looking out for.

Best thing about Alessia?
She’s funny.

Would you introduce Alessia to your friends?
Yeah. They’d get on with her.

Describe Alessia in three words.
Confident, chatty, funny.

What do you think Alessia made of you?
Now that I know her type, I doubt I was it. But I think I would have been when we were at university. She said she likes skinny, artsy boys and that’s not me now, whereas it was when I was 22.

Did you go on somewhere?
We tried, but everywhere was closed.

And ... did you kiss?
No.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?
I would have had a salad that didn’t contain anchovies.

Marks out of 10?
7.5.

Would you meet again?
Yeah, but not for any romantic reasons.

Alessia
31, works in sustainability product management

What were you hoping for?
A welcome break from dating apps.

First impressions?
Both of us are pretty chatty, so we quickly just got into it.

What did you talk about?
Family. “Bad” movies that you love. I think he may have the best worst film you can like. For readers to guess!

Most awkward moment?
We got on the same train but realised Jake was travelling in the wrong direction. It was a hurried goodbye.

Good table manners?
Our salads flew around as we spoke.

Best thing about Jake?
A jack of all trades with many hidden talents - I definitely couldn’t have predicted his answers to questions.

Would you introduce Jake to your friends?
Yes, he is friendly and very engaging.

Describe Jake in three words
Witty, energetic, irreverent.

What do you think Jake made of you?
I was laughing a lot and I don’t have a quiet laugh, so quite giggly and a good listener, I guess?

Did you go on somewhere?
We walked aimlessly around for a pub but we were past serving time.

And ... did you kiss?
No.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?
It was a fun evening but I’m not sure we vibed romantically.

Marks out of 10?
8.

Would you meet again?
We didn’t exchange numbers so I don’t think so.

Jake and Alessia ate at The Prince, London SW6. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

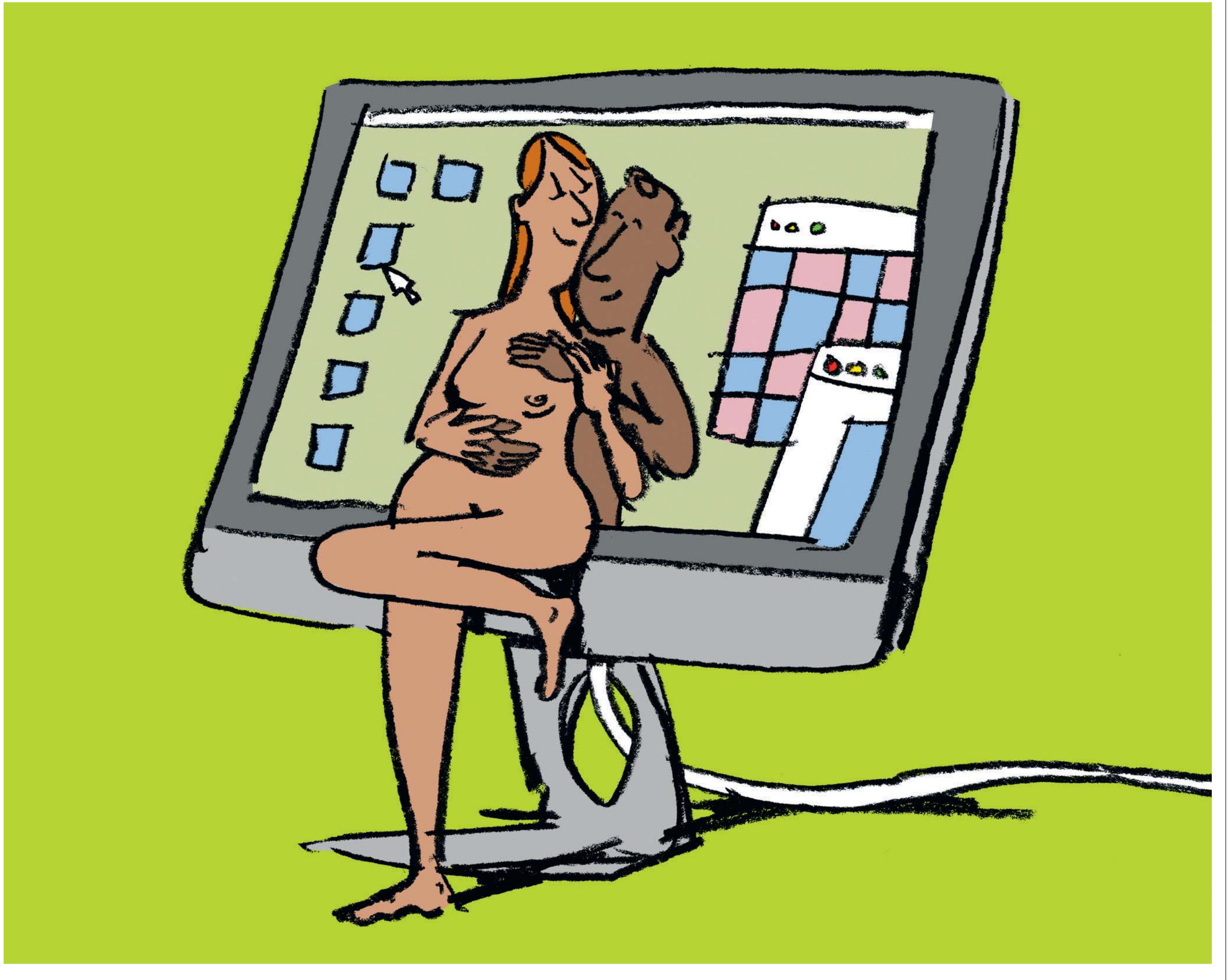


LINDA NYLIND AND GRAEME ROBERSTON/THE GUARDIAN

TRUE STORIES OF OUR SEX LIVES

This is how we do it

'A lot of our relationship is conducted via email - it's surprisingly intimate'



Susan, 43

Thomas and I like to schedule sex. We both have young children from previous marriages, so we have to squeeze in our dates around custody arrangements. We only get to spend three or four child-free days together a month, and every hour is meticulously mapped out in advance: we allocate time for workouts, time outdoors and for lazy mornings in bed. It can be frustrating squeezing an entire relationship into an occasional weekend together, but we try to make a game out of it. Done right, sitting down with your lover and his Google Calendar can be a form of foreplay. We've just planned a trip to the countryside and spent most of the diary session blocking out time for alfresco sex.

We have been together for two years but most of that time has been spent apart. A lot of our relationship is conducted via email. Communicating in that way can be surprisingly intimate. Writing makes it easier to say uncomfortable things. We will often dissect an argument we've had in person afterwards over email, and make up that way. We also write out specific sexual fantasies that we might be too shy to voice in person.

I often email Thomas with role play ideas for us to act out together. They're usually absurd: I'll play a rockstar and he'll play a hotel porter, for example. Last time I played a plumber, and he played a sexy bank manager with a leak. Sometimes five minutes into the actual sex we'll break character and slip back into our normal selves. But it's a form of escapism to begin by pretending to be someone else. I feel as if I leave my "mum" identity at the bedroom door.

Sometimes Thomas and I will be gearing up for sex and one of our kids will phone with a problem. It's helpful that Thomas is a parent too, because he understands how conflicting it can be to want to be there for your child, and also crave time for yourself. It's hard to snap back into plumber-persona after speaking to your crying nine-year-old. If either of us gets a call like that, there are no hurt feelings if sex is off the menu. All elaborate role plays are automatically rescheduled.

Thomas, 44

I'm not a terribly impulsive person. Some people enjoy the element of surprise, but I find surprises stressful. I have always loved the anticipation of counting down the days before a big holiday, or a treat, and I am similarly thrilled by the process of counting down the days before I plan to have sex.

We have different childcare schedules, so our days together are constantly shifting. If we only have a Tuesday night to play with, the sex we schedule will be very simple. I'll give Susan a massage and then we will have penetrative sex. But if there's a whole weekend in the diary, we'll do a role play. Sometimes we even prepare props. We recently did a scenario where I played a vicar and Susan was a horny parishioner. Susan crafted me a clerical collar out of a strip of old T-shirt and a bit of foam.

I've been sexually experimental with previous partners, but sex with Susan is a lot more fun than anything I have previously experienced. Partly that's down to the fact that we have the same sense of humour. Frequently, right in the middle of a role play, we'll both crack up and have to stop. The time we spend in bed is erotic but it's also about being silly together. Silliness is an undervalued ingredient of good sex.

We don't have any plans to share a home and become a blended family. In fact we actively plan not to. If Susan wasn't a parent, I think she would feel neglected by me, but she shares my belief that our children are the first priority. We don't want to make our kids feel sidelined by dragging them along to our dates. When Susan and I are together, we give one another our undivided attention, but that kind of intense focus on a romantic partner is not sustainable if you have children. For the time being, a few days a month together is enough. It also gives us adequate time apart to craft new props.

As told to Kitty Drake

Would you and your partner like to share the story, anonymously, of your sex life? Email sexlives@theguardian.com with a brief outline of what you get up to in the bedroom

Illustration: Ryan Gillett

You be the judge
Should my girlfriend unpack as soon as we get back from holiday?

Interviews: Georgina Lawton



The prosecution
Monty
The suitcase hangs around the bedroom for weeks. It's crazy

My girlfriend and I disagree over packing and unpacking etiquette. Whenever we get back from holiday, Kiran leaves her case in our bedroom for weeks on end. I just don't understand it.

My view is that once you've got home, you empty your case out, put a wash on and then put the case away. Kiran will sometimes wash her dirty laundry fairly quickly, but then continue leaving the clean clothes in her case for another few weeks.

I will ask her to put her stuff away and even after she relents, she will still keep the case in the corner of the room instead of putting it back in our attic, where it belongs. I find it crazy. One time, after a holiday to Greece, the case, full of clothes, lived in our bedroom for about five weeks, after which point I tipped all her stuff out and put the case away myself. That forced the issue, but I shouldn't have to do that.

When I get home from a trip, the first thing I do, after showering and sleeping, is take my clothes out and put the case away. The holiday is over. Boom. Move on. Kiran doesn't want to accept that.

But also, when we are on holiday, the same principle of denial applies. Whereas I will always fold and hang my clothes up, Kiran will not. She seems to be diametrically opposed to the idea of living well and just leaves all her stuff in her case throughout the trip. Why would you not want to feel at home when you are on holiday? Keeping all your clothes folded up and crumpled inside is just weird.

If Kiran has a nice dress, sometimes she will take that out, but the rest of the stuff remains in the case. It's odd behaviour. Kiran is definitely not super conscious about tidiness in general. She leaves lids of bottles around and dirty laundry stacked up.

We've lived together for four years and been together for seven, so I'm used to it by now, but now that she's 35, I'd like to see some changes. Next time we go on holiday, I'd like her too unpack her stuff like a normal adult, and then when we get home, I'd like her to put her stuff away within a week.

The defence
Kiran
I can't be bothered to unpack everything the second we get in the door

I can't really explain the reason why I don't like unpacking my suitcase after a big trip. It's just sort of embedded in my DNA. Also I just can't be bothered to unpack everything the second we get in the door.

Monty says it's because I like to live in denial. I guess that's true: I don't want to accept that the holiday is over. Keeping the case in the corner of my bedroom allows me to deny the fact that we're actually home – it keeps me in holiday mode for a little longer.

I don't think it really disturbs Monty all that much. He has his bag, which he puts away, and I have mine, which I store under our desk. Who cares when I take my clothes out? Once he told me I was "weird" for leaving a suitcase out for around a month after a trip to Greece. I came home from work and he had emptied its contents all over the floor and put the case into the attic. I told him that was irritating, because I was actually going to put it away myself – I just hadn't got around to it. He said he was sick of looking at it.

I don't think my habit of living out of my case when we go away is strange either. And it's also not as bad as Monty says. If I have silk dresses, expensive items or toiletries, I will take them out. But swimwear, beach clothes and everything else usually stays in the case. It's because we are only ever on holiday for a week or two at most, so I don't see the point in arranging everything as if we were at home, only to put it back in the case a few days later.

I prefer this way of doing things and I can't say I will bend over backwards to live like Monty, who lines up his shoes, and folds and puts away his underwear – that's a real waste of time on holiday when we could be sunbathing or living it up in the local town.

Monty has definitely always been the tidier one in our relationship, but after seven years together he should know what he's getting with me by now. I don't think my suitcase habits are harming anyone so he might have to put up and shut up.

The jury
of Guardian readers

Should Kiran empty her case?

I can empathise with Monty as this is an issue in my house, but he is her partner, not her dad. Next time, instead of dumping her clothes on the floor, why not wash them and put them away? They are partners, not housemates.
Jackie, 46

Monty's compromise of a week is fair, but unpacking is clearly not something Kiran wants to do. What if Monty offers to do her unpacking in addition to his and, in return, Kiran takes on a task Monty doesn't like doing?
Jamie, 49

Monty should welcome the extra storage space available to him if Kiran wants to live out of her suitcase on holiday. Back home, if Monty is so bothered he could, without making a fuss, unpack for her.
Manon, 66

Tidiness is clearly one of Monty's core values, so I do have some sympathy for his protestations. However, expecting Kiran to unpack on arrival at a romantic getaway screams killjoy, and anyone who tells their partner that they are "diametrically opposed to the idea of living well" needs to get a grip.
Lindsay, 31

What kind of partnership is this? Monty makes a virtue out of putting things "where they belong". He'd like to "see some changes from her". He wants her to behave like "a normal adult". He calls her habit of keeping her clothes in the suitcase "weird". Monty should focus on why he can't live with a bit of untidiness from the partner with whom he has chosen to set up home.
Stewart, 62

THE VERDICT

Guilty	There's a lot to unpack here	1
Not guilty	Kiran has no case to answer	4

You've heard the cases, now you decide …
Scan to vote on this week's dispute, share your own, or be one of the jury

My two step-parents got together. Should I be happy for them?



Ask
Annalisa Barbieri

I'm a woman in my 40s. My father died three years ago, my mother two. Three months after my mother's death, her partner, Alan (not his real name), and my father's widow, Martine (ditto), told me they were in love and a couple; it had started after my mother's death.

I recognise that they seem happy and deserve a new life. When they started popping up together at family events, I felt as if my mother was being erased, and also my troublesome relationship with Martine resurfaced.

My father left when I was four and went to live with Martine and her children. He didn't secure a place for me in his new family. Martine would deny me access to him while I was at their house, saying I had a poorly resolved Electra complex, which made me feel I wanted a place that was not really mine to have. My father didn't intervene. I felt ashamed for wanting attention from him and for not fitting in. It took years of therapy to realise I was the child and Martine was supposed to be an adult, and that it wasn't my fault. Mostly: what was my father doing? He later said he had fought for me but couldn't win.

Today, Martine and Alan live in the house my mother bought and lived in with Alan. I have no attachment to it but I own half of it. I want to move on. What belongs in the past and what to the present? How do I go ahead with the re-re-composed family?

When readers present so much "evidence", what they are really struggling with is: "Am I allowed to feel like this?" So allow me: yes, you have every reason to feel all that you do. You had a disrupted childhood, with weak behaviour from almost all the adults who were meant to care for you. As for your stepmother saying those things, this was wrong on so many levels and at any age, but please tell me she didn't say them when you were four?! I think you have had a lifetime of feeling left out, of not being put first.

You lost both your parents in very close succession. This was the first thing UKCP-registered psychotherapist Hendrix Hammond picked up on: "You're still grappling with grief and making sense of the loss and what has transpired with your step-parents. So what you're having to do in that time of grieving is also be expected to be happy that your step-parents are getting together. You need more time and space to get your head round it all." And this is really the crux of it. We both agreed this was a very complex situation and this current coupling was stirring up a lot of things that happened to you as a child.

Seriously think about asking Alan and Martine to buy out your share of the house. Do something with that money that's just for you. Go back into therapy for this stage of your life. Spend time with members of the family you like and who make you feel good. You don't have to play at big happy families with all of them. You were a child once who had few choices, but now you do.

I think your sticking point is that you still want approval and inclusion from your step-parents, but frankly they sound pretty self-absorbed. You can go back to that relationship later, if you want to. For now, make it all about you, put yourself first. I would also consider writing it all down. Imagine it being made into a film one day: wouldn't you think the little girl in it had every right to feel angry, left out and very, very upset? Now tend to that little girl, because she's you.

If you would like advice on a personal matter, email ask.annalisa@theguardian.com. See guardian.com/letters-terms for terms and conditions

Illustration: Igor Bastidas

Why semi-skimmed dressing is a taste of things to come





Jess Cartner-Morley
On trends

What size clothes do you wear? I don't mean the number in the label. I mean what size are they once they are on you? Are they big and oversized, or as small as you can wriggle into? Do you make a beeline for the smallest clothes, believing that the "right" size is the one that you can just about zip up if you breathe in? Or is your comfort zone big and baggy, so that your clothes take on their own shape, and the shape of actual you sits hidden underneath?

Many of us tend towards one or the other of these extremes. Which may be related to the fact that, if we're honest, well, most of us are at least a tiny bit weird about our body size and how we feel about it. Or it may just be because fashion tends to ricochet between the two extremes, bouncing from sucky-sucky tight and help-I'm-under-this-tent.

But the middle ground is having a moment. Semi-skimmed dressing, I'm calling it. Like the milk. Not full-fat, not skinny, but skimming your outline. Not an X-ray of your body in the way of tight clothing, and not a disguise of it either. A breezy pencil sketch of you, if you like. Semi-skimmed dressing is a ribbed vest, rather than a stretch jersey cami or a boxy T-shirt. It is straight-leg trousers belted at the waist, rather than skinny jeans or voluminous cargos hanging off your hips. It is a slinky sweater dress that slips and slides as you move, rather than a tent – or something tiny.

Semi-skimmed is the most comfortable way to wear your clothes – physically, and mentally too. More physically comfortable than tight clothes, not just because nothing digs in after lunch but because you don't have to calibrate your choice of knickers according to whether the seam will show. More physically comfortable than baggy clothes, because your sleeve doesn't dip itself in your coffee.

Ignore the size labels and dress like the milk. Not full-fat, not skinny, but skimming your outline

More mentally comfortable than tight clothes, because it can get kind of exhausting feeling so exposed all day, and because baggy clothes, which can make you almost invisible, are tiring in a different way.

Next time you are heading for a changing room, pick up what you want to try on in the size you think you are, and one size smaller, and one size bigger. Maybe one size bigger than that, too. Then go into the changing room and try one at random without looking at the size. The fabric should slide around smoothly as you move – without friction on your flesh, but not flapping around either. If blouse buttons gape when you move around, go for a size bigger. If trousers sag into wrinkles at the top of your thighs, go a size smaller. Keep the edges of the look crisp: your trousers should end cleanly, rather than puddling on your shoes or the floor. A turn-up might be necessary.

Still, semi-skimmed dressing can feel a little underpowered, when compared with the punchiness of body con or the caps-lock boldness of oversized. What you need is an extra touch of emphasis, here or there. The dark belt, in this outfit, is a good example: without it, the vest and trousers would read as a little underwear-ish. You need a polished, grown-up accessory to add definition: a belt or a shoe with a chiselled toe, a silky stocking or a colourful sock, a silk scarf or a chunky necklace.

You will find that semi-skimmed dressing is the easiest way to start your day. Just add a coffee, and you're good to go.

MODEL: PRIYANKA AT MILK MANAGEMENT; HAIR AND MAKEUP: SOPHIE HIGGINSON; VEST AND TROUSERS BOTH REISS; NECKLACE, ALONA FROM MATCHES FASHION; BELT, ROKIT

Photography: Tom J Johnson. Styling: Melanie Wilkinson

Squalane, the secret ingredient in tinted facial oils for a smooth glow



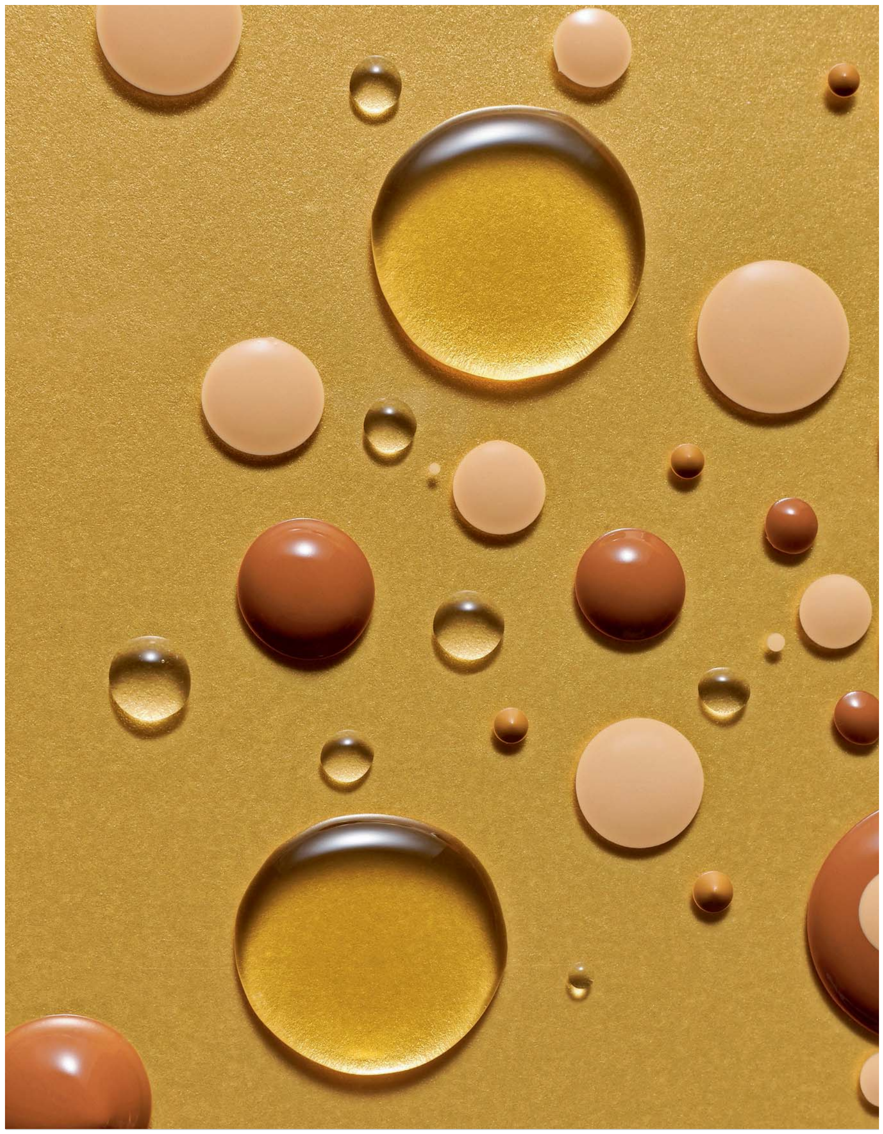
Sali Hughes
On beauty

I never expected five years ago - when it seemed that every beauty image was caked in matte, full-coverage foundation - that one would even be able to *buy* a tinted oil, much less wear one and be on trend, but I love to see it.

It's no secret that I favour a sheerer, more natural, dewy finished base, but the rise of the tinted oil gives instant skincare benefits too. Mainly thanks to the use in almost all of them of squalane, a non-greasy, lightweight emollient most often sourced from olives or sugarcane.

Squalene (it becomes squalane after a hydrogenation process) is naturally present in our skins but gets depleted as we age. Replacing it helps to relubricate skin and repair its barrier function, giving a softer, smoother, healthier appearance and a comfy feel. Also, virtually no one is sensitive to it.

One can buy squalane cheaply and add a drop to skincare and foundation, of course - but the new tinted oils come locked and loaded and ready to glow.



A generous-light coverage doesn't look like foundation but looks noticeably better than nothing

Among the best is Westman Atelier **Vital Skincare Complexion Drops**, £62, but my head has been turned by Hourglass's exceptional **Veil Hydrating Skin Tint**, £49. I've loved smooshing this tinted oil-cream over my dry skin, but the use of glycerin and squalane (as opposed to heavier, greasy-feeling carrier oils) means that every type can enjoy it. The sheer coverage means that 18 shades probably span at least 36 skin tones and the finish is beautiful - healthy-looking, natural and glassy. Concealer and anything else buff in seamlessly over the top.

If you'd like a fluid consistency, Clarins's new **Tinted Oleo-Serum**, £39, somehow manages to include an impressive 30% plant oils and squalane while remaining silky rather than greasy. It has what I'd call a generous-light coverage (a tad more than the Hourglass one) - that is, it doesn't look like foundation but looks noticeably better than nothing, evening out skin tone and adding glow.

If you can tolerate the dropper applicator, Typology's **Tinted Serum**, £28.90, is a great buy. Made almost entirely from natural ingredients (squalane in the main), this very light-textured oil packs a surprising punch in terms of pigment, giving unexpectedly good coverage for its category.

If you're loth to make the switch from matte, try applying powder over any of these, but only on the nose, chin and forehead, leaving cheeks with the youthful and appealing sheen of squalane.



Anita Bhagwandas
Trends on trial

Does blusher applied in a W shape give a more natural look?

The hack
Applying blusher in a W-shape for a sun-kissed look.

The test
Traditionally, blusher has been applied to the cheeks, the part of your face where you are most likely to look naturally flushed.

But this hack involves creating a W-shape across the face, starting at the top of the cheekbones near the temple, continuing down the cheeks, up along the bridge of the nose, then recreating the same on the other side, in a W-shape.

Interestingly, there is some logic here: adding a little blusher to other parts of the face can help it look more harmonious, and less "doll-like", but does this specific technique - beloved of Victoria Beckham - actually work?

I took a cream blush stick and drew the W-shape, before blending it in with a foundation brush.

Honestly I didn't love it: it was too close to my undereye area and made my eyes look red. Instead of looking glowing, I looked sunburned - the ultimate insult as I wear SPF 50 every day. However, I did add a little to my chin in the way Beckham suggests, which helped tie together my look.

The verdict
If you use blusher regularly, it's worth experimenting with where you place it; it can make a huge difference. Better still, the next time you're at a makeup counter, just ask an artist for their advice.



Photography: Kellie French. Illustration: Edith Pritchett



These five easy autumn gardening tasks can sow the seeds (literally and otherwise) for a plot to be proud of next year

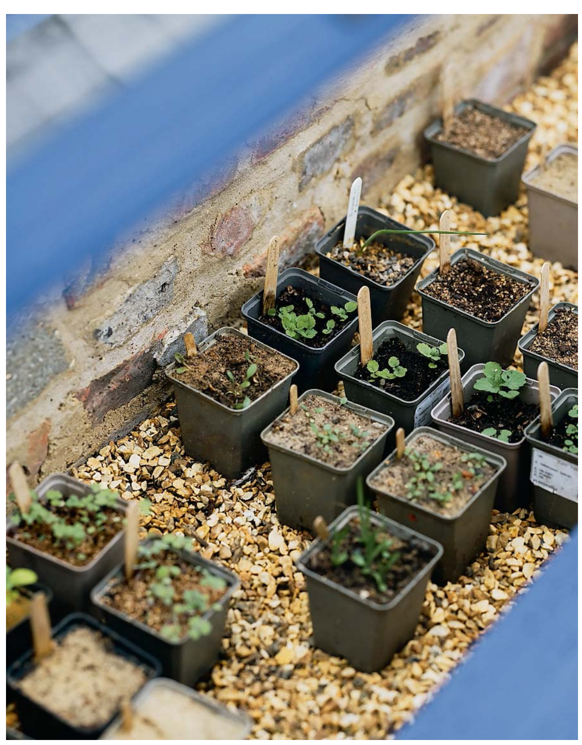
Fall at your feet

Words: Matt Collins
Photography: Eva Nemeth

A year into developing our new little garden as sustainably and cost-effectively as possible, things are gradually taking shape. The woody potentillas, viburnums and *Parthenocissus* I rooted as cuttings and layers last year have doubled - and in some cases quadrupled - in size, climbers are inching up the fences and, remarkably, the formerly shoulder-high almond tree now peeps over at the neighbour's garden.

A vibrant accumulation of annual, biennial and herbaceous flowers filled out the beds this summer - all grown from seed, plugs or pilfered divisions. Among them are hardy perennials fattened by June's heat and July's relentless rain to the point of needing splitting again. There have been crops of salad leaves, rocket, dill and parsley, a few tomatoes, raspberries and growbag potatoes, though the shifting sunlight across the seasons has been something to get acquainted with: an area I'd assumed would be bathed in summer sunshine proved inadequately bright for the bronze fennels and blue salvia I'd planted; in other areas a topping of mulch was needed to combat overexposure.

So, autumn is the time for pause, to take stock of the



← Autumn sowings placed in a cold-frame to over-winter; an unheated greenhouse, cool windowsill or upturned plastic storage container make good cold-frame alternatives

↓ Comfrey leaves are an excellent source of organic, natural fertiliser for boosting plant health

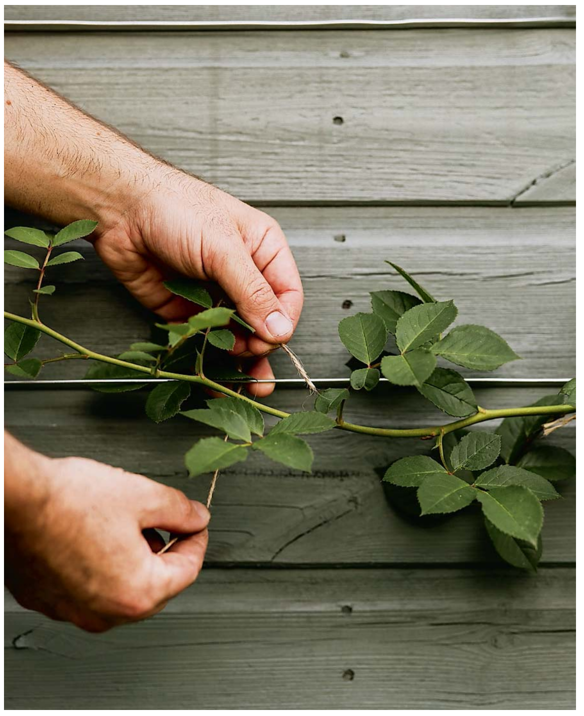


← Matt Collins among the annuals and perennials crammed into his small garden

↓ Sow a handful of hardy annuals now for flowers next year, such as *Ammi visnaga* and the apricot-coloured scabious *Scabiosa* 'Fata Morgana'



← Train climbing rose stems while they are still bendy and pliable by tying carefully to horizontal wires



← Plant white alliums (*Allium nigrum*) in distinct clumps as they'll be easier to locate during future border reorganising



↓ Create new borders using the no-dig method: heap compost on to dampened, weed-supressing cardboard before planting directly into it



spring and summer growth and note the gaps, failures, thrivers and space invaders for next year. That said, tasks loom for the months ahead. These are the five jobs I've prioritised for autumn that offer a break from the mundanity of weatherproofing fence panels and hoicking toy cars out of the catmint …

Sow hardy annuals

Strip away the annuals - the tumbling California poppies, lemony cosmos and tall, vivid orange Mexican sunflowers that have brought the garden to life this summer - and you'll be left with a paltry lot: scattered perennials and shrubs in their infancy. But this is why annuals and biennials are so brilliant, providing temporary height and colour while you wait for the slower-growing structural plants to get established. I get a handful of frost-hardy annuals growing this side of Christmas, sown either directly into the ground (best for cornflowers, poppies, bronze fennel) or into reusable 9cm pots on the kitchen windowsill (*Orlaya*, *Ammi*, scabious), whose resulting seedlings I'll prick out into individual pots and overwinter in the cold frame.

Using plastic takeaway containers as trays for sowings was my discovery of last year. They're easily manoeuvrable, fit two 9cm pots perfectly, and you can pour water into the bottom for the pots to soak up.

Train climbing plants

Among the few plants I bought new for this garden were two bare-root climbing roses: *Rosa* 'The Pilgrim' (soft yellow) and *R.* 'Claire Austin' (creamy white). Why? Because roses can take time to develop from cuttings and with so much uninspiring fence to cover, I wanted to get a few things moving. Throughout this first year in the ground, I've let them grow untethered, deadheading spent flowers but allowing the vigorous stems to reach upwards; the higher the better.

Now it's time to bring those stems horizontal. As for so many climbing plants (for example, wisteria, jasmine, hydrangea), the further into winter this is done, the more tricky it will become as the stems stiffen. In autumn, the year's growth is still pliable, and by tying rose stems level - whether down on to tensioned wires, a trellis or ground stakes - you'll produce unaccountably more flowering shoots next year than if left upright.

Make your own organic fertiliser

I've developed a mild addiction to liquid seaweed fertiliser as an all-round booster for annuals, dahlias, roses and fruit bushes. It stimulates flower and fruit production, increases resilience and promotes healthier growth. Organic fertiliser is all the more indispensable now that I'm gardening on chalk - typically nutrient-poor - but it's also costly. So I'm making my own comfrey fertiliser.

A UK-native wildflower and an inexpensive perennial, common comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) accumulates key nutrients - notably potassium - in its abundant leaves. Cut a few stems, strip the foliage and throw it into a bucket of water. In just under a month you'll have a powerful, enriching feed ready for watering the leaves - or roots - of selected plants. Dilute at roughly half a cup to a large watering can before applying, but be warned: it smells truly horrific. My comfrey stewing bucket is kept at the farthest reaches of the garden. Nettles also work.

Be canny with your autumn bulb order

In autumn everyone is either planting - or hurriedly ordering - spring bulbs. But in most of the UK, the ground remains diggable well into November; there is no need to rush out and plant narcissi, alliums or tulips sooner. You just want to avoid the ground freezing solid before you get to it.

My advice is to choose bulbs more likely to return each year, and those that, once transferred from a pot or window box, will look natural - or indeed naturalise - in the garden. Favourites include bright white *Allium cowanii*, the bee-magnet *Allium siculum*, low-growing *Tulipa turkestanica* and white summer snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*). I'm planting just a handful of bulbs this year, but in larger quantities as distinct clumps that can be easily relocated, notably the simple, white allium *A. nigrum* and the reliably perennial *Tulipa sylvestris*.

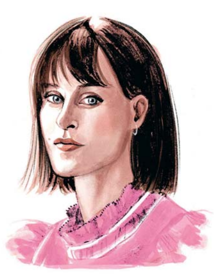
Prepare new beds through no-dig method

Our garden was predominantly lawn when we took it on, but I've etched away at the grass gradually, not wanting to end up with areas of exposed earth. Now with two beds close to capacity, and plenty of cuttings and seedlings gearing up, it's time for an extension. I'm opting for the no-dig approach, which avoids disrupting the existing soil structure and its resident micro-organisms and fungi. Placing overlapping cardboard in the shape of the new bed, I've soaked it, and spread four inches of compost on top - plants will be planted into this without disturbing the soil below. You can do this on top of grass - the turf is killed off through light deprivation, the weeds beneath suppressed. A few perennial weed exceptions are better removed before laying the cardboard: bindweed, bramble and dock.

The compost topping I'm using is a blend: part peat-free compost, part organic matter (a mix of well-rotted horse manure and homemade compost). The organic gardener Charles Dowding wrote the handbook on the no-dig approach, and is its best known advocate.

Plant a bulb lasagne: layer up your tubs for delicious and lasting displays





Alice Vincent
On flowers

The brown boxes have been stacking up by the back door since the beginning of the month, but I am finally thinking about planting the bulbs they contain. I tend to plant them late; I've tripped over those boxes until January in the past – the flowers still come – because we live in London, where it is often warm until the year wanes, and there is always something else to do.

However, if you're feeling keen, you can start to plant them now. A savvy bulb order will include ones that flower as early as February and March (earlier daffs, crocus, *Iris reticulata*) all the way through to late May (alliums and *nectaroscordum*). These can be planted in the same bed to yield a wave of flowers all the way through from the dregs of winter to the first barbecues of summer. In container gardens, this is where something called the bulb lasagne can be attempted.

I played around with bulb lasagnes a lot when I gardened exclusively in containers – on balconies and in window boxes. It's called a lasagne because, like the dish, you layer bulbs to the, hopefully, delicious effect of maximising a floral display for weeks on end. I'm not going to lie: it was a bit hit-and-miss, but the principles are useful for making the most of small planting spaces.

Purists will want to get the largest, deepest container they can: a wide terracotta bowl-shaped planter, for instance, or a reclaimed tin bath, and probably a tape measure.

As a general rule, bulbs need to be planted at a depth that is three times their height. So, if you have a bulb that is 2cm tall, you plant it 6cm deep. A good bulb lasagne will therefore include bulbs of different sizes, planted in well-spaced layers. It helps if they flower at different times, too. A classic combination would be to plant later-season tulips or alliums at the bottom of the container, then narcissus or daffodils, followed by crocus or *Iris reticulata* (both small and early) on the top layer.

Put tulips or alliums at the bottom, then narcissus or daffodils, followed by crocus or Iris reticulata on top

Flirt outside these boundaries as far as you feel comfortable – maybe you want to scatter a few muscari or fritillaria into the mix. It's worth noting that anything allium or daffodil-scented will deter squirrels.

Whatever you choose, don't be afraid to pack them in: there are few horticultural sights more tragic than a great big pot with a handful of flowers in. Once you've reached the top, cover the whole thing with compost and grit (looks tidy and deters squirrels and molluscs), and await the show.

It can take a bit of trial and error to get right: foliage will pop up first, too, so don't expect flowers in isolation. Err on the safe side and keep things simple: cohesive colours across the selection will result in beauty, regardless of what blooms when.



Gynelle Leon's Houseplant of the week
Rainbow bush

Why will I love it?
This shrubby succulent, scientific name *Portulacaria afra Variegata*, is an instant mood-lifter with its bright red woody stems set against creamy green variegated leaves. This striking contrast adds a pop of colour and cheer to any space.

Light or shade?
It's a sun lover, not a sunbather. It thrives in bright, indirect light.

Where should I put it?
It's an ideal desk companion, being compact and easygoing. Place near a window that receives plenty of natural light but not in direct sun. It will brighten up your workspace and is pretty low-maintenance, so there's no need to worry overly about its care.

How do I keep it alive?
It's essential to mimic the bright, warm climate of its native South Africa. This succulent prefers to stay dry. Allow the top inch of the soil to dry out before watering – and water sparingly, especially during the winter. Also, keep your rainbow bush warm, ideally between 18C and 24C.

Did you know ...
In its natural habitat, it's known as the spekboom or elephant bush and is, indeed, often eaten by elephants.



PHOTOGRAPHY: DEBORAH VERNON/ALAMY; PRICK LDN

We are away, and someone's trying to steal my whole life



Tim Dowling
On modern life

It is my wife's birthday weekend and we are away, with the middle one house-sitting. The term "house-sitting" is new to us - when our grown children lived at home, looking after the dog and the cat while we were away was just part of the deal; we never had to think about it. Now we have to invite them to do us the favour. Potentially, they could all say no.

Some friends are arriving later, but for the first night it's just the two of us eating by candlelight. The evening is cool. The stars are very bright. My phone pings in my pocket, twice in succession. Although I shouldn't, I look at it.

"Uh oh," I say.

"What?" my wife says.

I have two messages. The first is from the bank reporting that some suspicious activity on my card has been blocked. The second is from a different bank, saying the exact same thing about my other card.

"What should I do?" I say.

"Ring them back," my wife says.

"It's not that simple," I say.

"It really is that simple," my wife says.

"How do I know this is real?" I say. "It could be a scam!"

I tend to treat any report of suspicious activity as suspicious. I assume computer warnings about viruses are themselves viruses. When my children text me to say they've lost their phones, I believe them to be convincing bots trying to get my bank details.

"Two identical messages," I say. "That's doubly suspicious."

"Ignore it then," my wife says.

"But it's happened twice!" I say. "Someone might be trying to steal my whole life!"

"You don't need to panic," she says. This advice comes too late: I am already panicking. Reception is poor, and when my food is served I am still on the phone with the first bank, still treating them as if they might not be a bank at all.

"Date of birth?" I shout. "What do you want that for?"

I stay on the phone all through pudding, until both cards are cancelled.

"Well, this was nice," my wife says.

"I'm sorry," I say. "It had to be done."

By the next afternoon our friends have arrived. There are activities available at this place, including yoga, and walking, and tennis. My wife has already paid for everyone to attend some weird breathing class at five. I am reading in a deckchair.

"Isn't it lovely," my wife says.

"Yes it is," I say.

"You slightly ruined last night by panicking unnecessarily," she says. "But never mind."

"I was overwrought," I say. I don't mention I've been receiving texts and calls all morning reporting more suspicious activity. I figure: the cards are cancelled; I can do no more.

"Are you coming to breathing?" my wife says.

"Maybe," I say.

My wife goes off in search of someone more fun to talk to, and I return to my book. Some minutes later I notice my wife's phone ringing on the empty deckchair next to mine. According to the screen, it's the middle one calling.

I stay on the phone all through pudding, until both cards are cancelled. 'Well, this was nice,' my wife says

"It's me," I say, "on Mum's phone."

"Oh," he says. "Did you see the picture I sent her?"

"No," I say. "What picture?"

"The garden wall sort of blew over last night," he says.

"What do you mean, blew over?" I say.

"Like, collapsed," he says.

"What do you mean, collapsed?"

"Have you looked at the picture?"

"I can't look at the picture and talk to you at the same time," I say. I hear a derisive exhalation at his end.

"Yes," he says, "you can."

The picture looks like the aftermath of an earthquake: jumbled piles of dusty brick and splintered trellis, heaps of uprooted ivy.

"This was the wind, you say?"

"What wind?" my wife says, suddenly standing over me.

"Here," I say. "Talk to Mum." I hand the phone over, thinking: I've been away for, like, 36 hours.

"Just leave it," my wife says to the middle one.

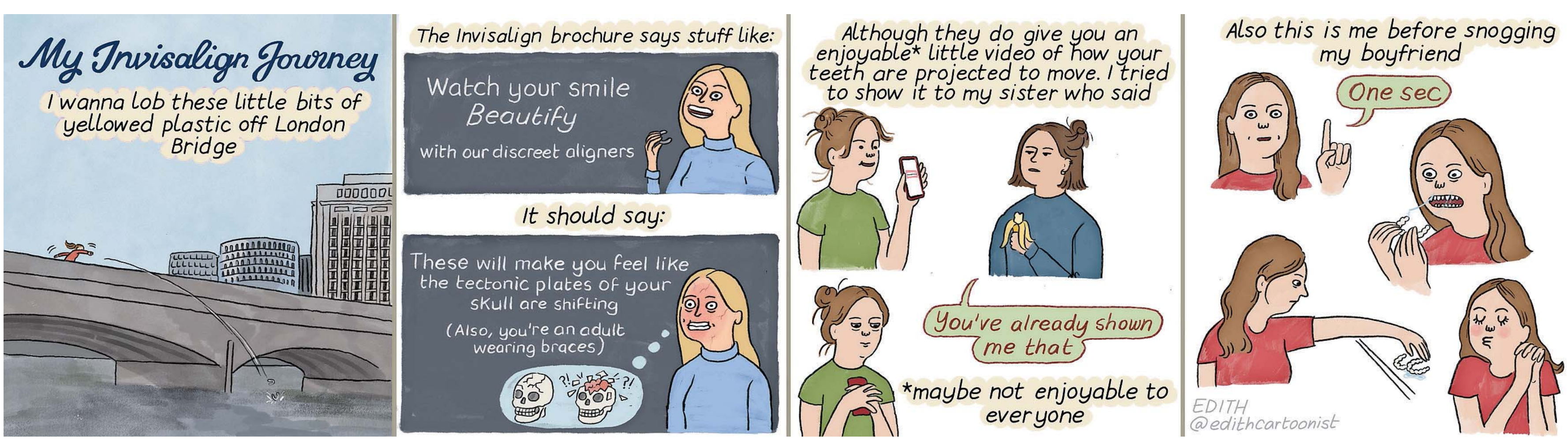
"But make sure the tortoise isn't under it," I say.

At five past five someone comes to get me for breathing class - a room where everyone is lying on mats with blindfolds on, depriving themselves of oxygen while an instructor walks among them saying encouraging things. I put on a blindfold and breathe along.

"Make your inner wholeness shine and smile," says the instructor. I think: fat chance.

When I come out there is a text from the middle one that says: "Tortoise is fine."

Edith Pritchett On millennial life



Family checklist

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Reduce, reuse, recycle – teaching kids to make the most of cardboard can make a difference

BEYOND THE BOX



Children are the future custodians of the planet, which is why they need to understand how their actions can impact the environment, and recycle whenever possible.

By instilling these values early on, you can help to create a generation of environmentally conscious individuals who are committed to making a positive difference.

Given that it's one of the most widely used materials in packaging, it makes sense to start with learning how to recycle cardboard, which already has a very high recycling rate, with more than 80% collected and successfully recycled into new boxes.

The first step is to make recycling a part of everyday life – encourage children to participate in household recycling and teach them how to sort materials correctly.

The next step is to understand how to recycle properly. Cardboard should be free of contaminants and food waste for it to be recycled, but flattening it is also crucial, so that local bin lorries avoid unnecessary journeys.

And finally, children can always repurpose cardboard for arts and crafts. It's a great way to appreciate the material for both its entertaining and environmentally friendly qualities!

It's essential that everyone takes the time to educate themselves about the importance of recycling cardboard, so that children can learn about becoming a sustainably focused society.

You can find out more about recycling cardboard by visiting *cardboard.org.uk* or follow *@beyondtheboxuk*

Help a child discover the joy of reading



In 2022, one in four children in England left primary school unable to read well. Disadvantaged children were disproportionately impacted as the attainment gap reached its largest level in 10 years*.

Many children leave primary school with poor reading skills, which directly contributes to poor educational attainment, lower literacy in adulthood and has even been linked to a lower life expectancy.



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*Fair Education Alliance report card 2022.

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They believe that the early years of the children in their care are crucial, so they endeavour to meet those children's emotional, physical, cultural and educational needs. They prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all children, staff and families, and they strive to nurture, care and inspire children with outstanding standards.

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For more information or to book your personal tour, contact them on 0330 333 1080 at *csa@familyfurstnurseries.com* or visit *familyfirstnurseries.com*

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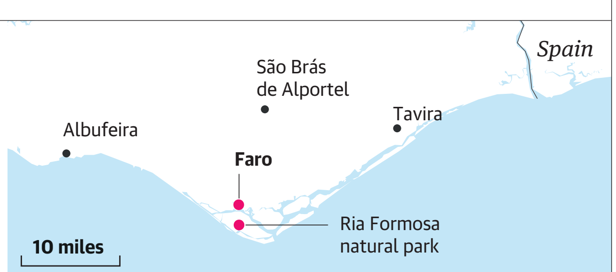


An early-1970s beach house, left, near Faro by Manuel Gomes da Costa

Faro is much more than a gateway to the Algarve: fans of modernism are now waking up to the way its sharp, angular buildings shine in the southern sun
Overleaf, more unusual urban breaks

'It feels like Havana on the Algarve'

Words: Paul Tierney



In the glare of the morning sun, the streets of downtown Faro are a textural hot mess. A faded art deco shopfront sits cheek by crumbling jowl with its neighbour's rusting balustrades and handmade fondant tiles. A bank swerves around the corner like an ice-cream sandwich hit by pistachio light. Everywhere there are buildings you might generously describe as less art and more nouveau. These are layers of the near past – and I'm smitten.

But in this overlooked city, crowded with dusty anomalies, it is the modernist architecture – strict, sharp, punctuated by flat roofs and sloping angles – that attracts the most attention. Faro has more than 500 of these mid-century buildings, the highest concentration in southern Europe. Perversely, it's only now that the curious are taking note. From looming, Rio-style high-rises clad in geometric scallops to modernist villas, the structural clarity and sheer chutzpah they share are catnip for the modern enthusiast.

In the early 1950s, having made their money in South America, a group of Portuguese architects led by Algarvian Manuel Gomes da Costa returned home ready to confront political values and reject outmoded ideas. Inspired by the work of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Oscar Niemeyer, they were tasked with breathing new life into the region, and in that sense their take on modernism – the "South Modern" style – did much to address Faro's lack of character.

For easy reference, and it's a bit of a push, you could call it the Palm Springs of Portugal, although the buildings here retain an undeniably unique flavour. Gomes da Costa is known for a style of tropical futurism that pitted nature against the elements in truly progressive ways. His Brazilian-inspired *cobogós* are latticed slabs of brutal concrete, designed to cool a facade and filter light into shadowy abstraction. Everything he created celebrates the sun in some shape or form, so it's slightly ironic that they're now drawing people off the beaches and on to the streets.

On Rua Dom Francisco Gomes sits The Modernist hotel (doubles from €150, minimum two nights), a former maritime office reconfigured into guest apartments, for those who don't mind being labelled "archi-tourists". Like a chest of drawers, neatly positioned above a lottery kiosk, this symmetrical paean to a time gone by (once described as "the ugliest building in Faro") is an ugly duckling grown up. There are no TVs here, no art on the walls. Just local green marble, red vinyl floors and the bed you wish you had at home. The Modernist is no-frills luxe, if such a term exists. It's all about the lines.

Owners Christophe and Angelique are Parisians who came four years ago and never left. "Faro is a miracle of design and architecture," says Christophe. "It was love at first sight. It felt like Havana – neglected, but with such wonderful heritage. Maybe the comparison is too much, but it certainly has that vibe. It's not the prettiest of cities on the Algarve, and it's not polished, but there's a lot to discover here, and a lot, we believe, that needs to be preserved."

With that in mind, the pair have become unofficial cheerleaders – the mod squad – of the scene and delight in inviting others to see what they see. Guests are encouraged to take curated architectural walking tours of Faro's

PAUL TIERNEY/THE GUARDIAN; GONZALO AZUMENDI/ALAMY



Sandy beaches in the Ria Formosa natural park, south of Faro

modernist charms, bypassing traditional tourist spots in favour of streets distinctly less trodden.

Away from the centre, where the palm-lined avenues are broader, and clusters of estates fan out like petals, buildings blend the future with the past. Detail is everything of course, and you're never more than an overhang away from door handles to die for, or the geometric thrill of a tile-covered wall.

On Rua Emiliano Costa or Rua dos Bombeiros Portugueses, in what's known as the South Modern residential area, mid-century houses retain their original features but are living, breathing spaces. If someone leans over a geometric-patterned balcony, they may well offer an impromptu invitation to take a look inside. The vibe is South American in spirit, laid-back to the point of inertia, and refreshingly low-key. It's a bit like Through the Keyhole, sponsored by Super Bock.

Given the renewed interest in Faro's buildings, it's not surprising that like-minded creatives have since converged, launching a clutch of restaurants and watering holes that feel *simpático* to this new/old landscape. Bago's dark, enveloping interior, lined with narrow black shelves of Portugal's finest wines, is a good starting point. This is the spot where English professors from Faro's University of Algarve come to mark PhDs over a glass of decent Douro, where people buy a whole bottle for themselves, without fear of sulphites or shame.

Within staggering distance is Ato, a new dining proposition led by a young American chef, Sean Marsh. The space is an unpretentious ode to the Algarve and beyond, where cuttlefish cooked in its own ink looks better on the plate than the image in your head. The room is slick and simple, which all sits very nicely with the modernist crowd who aspire to this aesthetic purity.

At weekends, or when city life palls, people head over to Faro Island, a sliver of flaxen beach on the other side of the Ria Formosa – the billowing wash of lagoons that hug this coastline for about 40 miles. A dinky, year-round catamaran ferry costs a mere €3.75 and takes 25 minutes to gently reach land, while the captain plays a Portuguese version of Céline Dion's My Heart Will Go On. Luckily, the only iceberg in sight is the angular skyline of Faro, diminishing in the distance.

I'm met at the pier by Richard Walker, a British artist, part-time resident and modernism buff. "There's a community here which is difficult to define," he says. "You've got young international surfers, off-grid hippies, local Portuguese people. And then there are oddballs like me – the artists, observers and thinkers. It's a place for ideas."

Perched on a sand dune carpeted in succulents is the charming Café do Zé, a rusting hut serving milky *cafe galão* and hunger-crunching pork *bifanas*. Richard talks up the Faro Modernist Weekend, an event he organised in November 2022 and will repeat this year. "There's an international appetite for modernism that's really rather far-reaching. We have dinners, art exhibitions, architectural walking tours with access to interiors. It's design in the sunshine."

Walking towards the headland, I check out the Atlantic-facing houses, some of them modernist, others featuring minarets that nod to Morocco and Tangier in the distance. The Aeromar hotel fits right in (rooms from about €60). This is modernism at its most extreme, designed by our friend Gomes da Costa, with period features – an inglenook fireplace, marble staircases – that hark back to the future.

The *senhōra* on the desk reminds me of Sybil Fawlty, menus are written in the font Comic Sans, and the toilets are that rare shade of navy blue last seen in the mid-1970s. It's a David Lynch movie come to life, but not without its charm.

Hermès recently shot a fashion campaign at the Aeromar: this could be the place's making or undoing. Faro's a modernist city but it will never be modern.

The Modernist Weekend runs from 10 to 12 November. Events – from walking tours to open houses – cost from €10



A wall of hand-painted azulejo tiles, above, from the early 1960s





A 1957 apartment block, left, and a 1970s beach house, right, both by Manuel Gomes da Costa. Below: Bago wine bar





Second cities

Fewer tourists, more to see, excellent eating – and all just a train ride away

Rotterdam

The Netherlands' second city is a winner for those weary of its more famous (and oversubscribed) rival. Sure, there's water – it's Europe's largest port, after all – with rivers, canals and harbours at every turn. But this sprawling metropolis doesn't yield its pleasures as easily as Amsterdam, largely because second world war bombing destroyed most of the historic centre. Its pioneering postwar architecture is, however, what makes "Manhattan on the Maas" so fascinating.

Treasures include the 1970s Cube Houses designed by Piet Blom, the landmark cable-stayed Erasmus Bridge, the 1960 retro-futuristic Euromast and eclectic buildings in the leafily landscaped Museumpark. Alongside design museum Het Nieuwe Instituut and the Kunsthal gallery, a must-visit is The Depot, an ambitious €94m bowl-shaped "storage facility" for the city's art collection, its rooftop cafe boasting panoramic views. Equally compelling is Delfshaven, which escaped bombing, and is now home to waterside pubs, a microbrewery and tucked-away restaurants.

Eat and drink

The imposing Markthal took five years to build and, with nearly 100 vendors, is a great place for anything from a *pastel de nata* to sushi: skewered tapas at 21 Pinchos are served at the counter with a chilled verdejo. The city's 180 nationalities mean there's a diverse food scene: a three-hour self-guided Food Tour takes in six off-the-beaten-track authentic joints, from chips at Dutch institution Bram Ladage to spicy jianbing crepes at Super Crepe in multicultural West-Kruiskade, Puglian snacks at Panzero and Surinamese curry chicken rolls at Chinny.

Up-and-coming neighbourhood Katendrecht is a must for both the Fenix Food Factory, a waterfront craft beer, street food and natural wine destination, and De Matroos En het Meisje (its name "The Sailor & The Girl" references the former red light district). The blind set menu comprises four or five creative courses with, on my visit, memorable dishes such as slow-cooked egg with fennel and grapefruit, smoked tomato tarts, and turbot with girolles. Buzzy Witte de Withstraat is a good bet afterwards for a bar crawl, whether a beer at popular NRC or, just off the main drag, something gin-soaked at Spikizi.

Stay

Around the corner from Witte de Withstraat is the serenely stylish Hotel Âme (doubles from €140), while walking distance from Museumpark is the design-conscious Supernova (doubles from €136). The latest boutique hotel is Morgan & Mees, located across the street from The Depot (doubles from €116).

Get there

Direct Eurostar all the way from London St Pancras, taking just 3h 49m.
Stephen Emms

Naples

If there was ever a time to visit Naples, it is now. The city is basking in the glory of being crowned Italy's football league champions for the first time since the days of Maradona. The win proved to Neapolitans something they have long known: that Naples, with its warm spirit, art and architecture, chequered ancient history and natural beauty is unrivalled in Italy.

No one could be blamed for simply spending the day watching the world go by from one of the many cafes and bars in the historic centre. It's like an enormous open-air theatre, with laundry-laced alleyways and piazzas teeming with life. But its centuries of history have bequeathed it a wealth of castles, churches, palaces and museums that are not to be missed.

Highlights are the National Archaeological Museum for its ancient marbles and mosaics, as well as the lesser-known Secret Room with its collection of ancient erotic art.

The San Severo chapel museum, just off Piazza San Domenico, houses the much celebrated life-size Veiled Christ sculpture in marble, while Caravaggio's The Seven Works of Mercy, his first work made while on the run after killing a man, can be seen in the church of Pio Monte della Misericordia.

Lesser-known treasures are often hidden behind doorways, such as the whimsical cloistered gardens of San Gregorio Armeno or the frescoed Renaissance cloister, exhibition space and bar of Made in Cloister.

Days can be spent picnicking on the Lungomare, the promenade that skirts the bay, or sunbathing at one of the beach lidos, such as Bagni D'Elena, and lunching on seafood. It's possible to rent boats to explore the nearby islands. Vast, grassy Capodimonte park is where you'll find Neapolitans watching the sun set.



A street in the Quartieri Spagnoli in central Naples

ACHIM THOMAE/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT HARDING/ALAMY







Rotterdam's Delfshaven district, left, on the Maas River. Bikes and cafes in Freiburg, right, and, below, the Schauinsland cable car above the city

Eat and drink
The majolica-tiled Osteria della Mattonella in the Quartieri Spagnoli is the place to savour simple Neapolitan cuisine such as spaghetti with ragù stewed for eight hours. In the Chiaia district, Jus Enoteca Naturale has given local food a contemporary makeover, placing special emphasis on local wines and small organic producers. Bars such as Oak**,** Indovino and Antica Cantina Sepe (a wine shop by day) are run by a new generation of entrepreneurs and attract an arty crowd with their curated lists of craft beers and Vesuvian natural wines.

Stay
Atelier Inès (doubles from €130) is set back from the cacophonous streets of the Sanità district in a luscious garden. Each room is decorated with art and sculptures designed by the owner, artist Vincenzo Annibale. Casa D'Anna (doubles from €120), also in Sanità, feels like a sumptuous Italian home, filled with antiques. Its gorgeous terrace is the perfect respite after a long day's sightseeing.

Get there
Eurostar from London, then an overnight train from Paris to Milan. The high-speed Frecciarossa train from Milan to Naples takes five hours.
Sophia Seymour

Freiburg

Surrounded by forest, accessed by swift trains, and with a steepled skyline reaching to the heavens, the university city of Freiburg presents a side of Germany unfamiliar to many visitors. "Less stress, less panic," says Ulrike Peissl, a tour guide for Discover Freiburg. "Bikes everywhere. Trams, not cars. Wine so good we don't share it. Vegan cafes where dairy milk costs extra. The mentality is different." The clincher? Few British visitors.

The traditional Freiburg experience begins outside the Minster, the Old Town's anchor and a Gothic masterpiece. Its exterior is covered in nearly 100 screaming gargoyles and its interiors brim with centuries of symbols; the choir and apse revel in rainbow light from stained glass crowdfunded by medieval guilds.

Just outside, the car-free narrow lanes are paved with cobbles, and arcaded squares overflow with market stalls. Children race toy sailboats on the bächle, a network of 30cm-wide canals which channel water around the city.

For cooler days, the city's fine double act comprises the Augustiner Museum, for medieval art in a monastery setting, and the more modern Museum für Neue Kunst. A ride on the Schauinslandbahn cable car or the Schlossberg funicular brings a lungful of the Black Forest, and a land of tall pine forests threaded by hiking trails.

Eat and drink
An autumn visit means savouring the Black Forest's harvest. Alte Wache, once a barracks for Austrian soldiers, then a public toilet, now a wine bar and shop, is great for gutedel, a curiously unknown white wine grape from the area. It also sells Kalte Sofie, a boozy sorbet made from the same grape, which deserves similar fanfare.

As with all other German cities, Freiburg is big on beer. At Hausbrauerei Feierling, students clink heavy steins of pilsner and soak up the beer with pretzels. Gasthaus Roter Bären claims to be the oldest inn in Germany (since 1120, they'll tell you), and serves Habsburg-era staples such as schnitzel with lingonberries.

Michelin-starred Wolfshöhle on characterful Konvictstrasse tops the list for splash-out options. And if you're looking for the ultimate crowd-pleaser souvenir, check out the chocolate cuckoo clocks in Confiserie Rafael Mutter.

Stay
The well-stocked libraries and bookcase wallpaper of Park Hotel

Readers' travel tips
Offbeat city breaks

Winning tip
Zagreb, Croatia
Head up to medieval Gornji Grad-Medveščak (upper town) for wonderful views over a sea of red roofs and cathedral spires. A highlight was a trip to the Museum of Broken Relationships, where people contribute mementos of their relationships to the collection – the quirkiest of which had to be a scab! **Maggie**

Leiden, Netherlands
Take a little staircase down from an old tollbooth on one of Leiden's 88 bridges and hop on to one of the silent electric tour boats. Drift along the canals of this stunning old Dutch city past townhouses as fine as any in Amsterdam, the botanical gardens, windmills, university buildings and the 17th-century observatory. **Maartje**

Bremen, Germany
Bremen is a little bit like a German version of York: the medieval Schnoor quarter is a maze of narrow cobbled lanes lined with half-timbered buildings, with brass plates hanging overhead. I really recommend the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum dedicated to one of Germany's finest female painters. **Anna Regeniter**

La Spezia, Italy
With its neoclassical townhouses, wide boulevards and maritime heritage, this is a favourite Italian city break – and it is an affordable gateway to gorgeous Cinque Terre villages. I've spent relaxed days there hopping on and off boats, passing pastel houses perched on cliffs and walking the scenic paths linking the villages. **Liz Blyth**

Bergen, Norway
If you are looking for a super-chilled break, with good art galleries – Kode is superb – and great cafes and restaurants, Bergen is a sound choice. It's also one of the few city breaks where you can pack your walking boots as well as town clothes, and head up one of the mountains that surround the city, the most popular of these being Fløyen. Great little bars include Baran, Henrik, or the superb record shop/bar Apollon. **Paul Handley**

To enter our readers' tips competition and see the terms and conditions, visit theguardian.com/readers-travel-tips (you must be a UK resident to enter). The week's best tip, chosen by Tom Hall of Lonely Planet, wins a £200 voucher to stay at a Coolstays property. This is a selection of tips: see more on our website

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Post (doubles from €107) reflect the city's academic vibe, but the feeling is anything but studious; it appeals also to couples and families using Freiburg as a basecamp for nearby Europa Park and Rulantica theme parks. For a Minster view, Hotel Oberkirch (doubles from €177) is the hot ticket.

Get there
Trains operated by Eurostar, TGV Lyria and Deutsche Bahn connect Freiburg to London in under seven hours.
Mike MacEacheran

Alicante
Best known for its whitewashed old town, castle and golden beaches, Alicante has been creating a culinary buzz in recent years, with smart new restaurants and bars. Sunny, strollable and surrounded by pine-clad hills, this pocket-sized city makes for a relaxed break. A good start is a walk along the tiled Explanada – an elegant promenade lined with palm trees and artisan stalls – before delving into the tangled streets of the medieval Santa Cruz neighbourhood, all colourful doorways and flower-filled balconies. Taking the zigzag path to Santa Barbara castle brings coastal views aplenty as well as the Museum of the City of Alicante, and more of the city's art scene is on show at the MUBAG fine arts museum in 18th-century Gravina Palace and the Museum of Contemporary Art. But with 320 sunny days a year, it's lovely to simply wander the coastline, stopping for beachside drinks, or hike the nearby Sierra de San Julian hills.

Eat and drink
Sea-view spots and design-led tapas bars all serve fresh local produce. Simple La Taberna del Gourmet serves tasty tapas made with fresh fish and vegetables from its own farm. It's run by chef María José San Román, who is also behind upmarket marina-side Monastrell, famous for its golden-crisp paellas. Tapas spot El Portal is all gold and black interiors with a menu of seafood and local cured meats. And Bar Manero combines mosaic floors and art deco design with tapas of seafood, plump sausages and rich cheeses. For dreamy views, La Ereta is halfway up the path to the castle with a wall of windows looking out to sea and a fixed menu that changes daily.

Stay
Set in a handsome modernist building in the old town, Hotel Les Monges Palace (doubles from €70) used to be a convent. Behind the spearmint-green façade, it has been restored to retain the stained glass, coloured tiles and heavy wooden beams, crowned by a sun-splashed roof terrace. As its name suggests, Hotel Boutique Alicante S XVII (doubles from €102) is a former palace dating back to the 17th century. Inside the metal-studded doors are honeyed stone walls with grand arched ceilings above modern furnishings. There is an atmospheric, low-lit bar and a roof terrace.

Get there
Eurostar to Gare du Nord, and transfer to Gare du Lyon for a train to Barcelona Sants. From Barcelona Nord there is a direct train to Alicante (renfe.com).
Sarah Gordon

The Barrio de Santa Cruz in Alicante, above. The St Michael bridge over the Leie River in Ghent, right



D CARRENO/ALAMY; SEBASTIEN LECOCQ/ALAMY

Ghent
Often overlooked in favour of Brussels, Antwerp and Bruges, Ghent deserves a place among the best Belgian city breaks. Filled with pretty Flemish architecture, a bustling student population and a creative, vegetarian- and vegan-friendly restaurant scene, it offers plenty of ways to while away a fun weekend.

Wandering around the city's cobbled streets, or perhaps taking a boat tour through its canals is a great way to get a feel for Ghent's architectural grandeur, which reflects its status in medieval times as Europe's biggest city after Paris. There are great views from the 15th-century Ghent Belfry, next to St Nicholas Church in the main square.

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Journey along the scenic coast by train, to Lecce. Start with a walking tour that introduces you to the impressive bell tower which dominates the main square and ends with some local flavour of Lecce's coffee and pastries. You then have time to visit the Roman amphitheatre - once home to mighty gladiator tournaments.

Days 4-5. Alberobello & Bari
Day 4, travel to Alberobello, a charming town famous for its curious cone-shaped houses. On Day 5, head to Bari for a guided tour of the city's 11th-century church, the Romanesque Basilica di San Nicola, and Swabian Castle.

Days 6-7. Matera & Polignano a Mare
On Day 6 uncover Matera, a town set in a small canyon and known for its complex of ancient caves. Day 7 is free to continue exploring the stunning surroundings of Polignano a Mare.

Day 8. London
After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to London Gatwick or local airport.

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cultural attraction is the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (the Ghent Altarpiece), a painting by the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck in St Bavo's cathedral. Right now, it's looking its best as the 15th-century triptych was recently restored.

There's plenty of less mainstream culture, too, from a thriving live music scene - Trefpunt and Bar Lume for bands and Kompass Klub has top techno and house DJs - to experimental arts venues in former dockland quarter Dok Nord.

The city is known for independent, socially conscious shopping. There's Mieke and A.puur.a for sustainable fashion, and local sustainable lingerie maker La Fille D'o championed body positivity before everyone else. This being Flanders, there's no shortage of bike shops, such as Bidon Coffee & Bicycle and Tuub.

Eat and drink
Ghent abounds with quality plant-based restaurants, such as Lokaal, a cooperatively run vegan cafe. One great example of Ghent's young, creative food scene is Raaf, which serves natural wine and delicate small plates in an elegantly converted butcher's storeroom. For something more traditional, 't Oud Clooster is a cosy spot, offering *Gentse waterzooi*, a creamy chicken stew, or North Sea prawn croquettes.

It wouldn't be a trip to Belgium without some Trappist beers, which are available everywhere. The city's own brews, sold at Gruut, include Roomer, a delicate local elderflower liqueur. On a sunny day, there's nowhere better than Vooruit's terrace.

Stay
The De Draecke is a basic but comfortable hostel in the centre, with dorms or private twin rooms from €40. For bigger budgets, Great (doubles from €160) is worth a look, with tastefully decorated rooms and apartments in a historic building.

Get there
Eurostar to Brussels, then local train to Ghent. The first leg takes 2h 49min. Brussels to Ghent takes 48 minutes.
Rachel Hall





Lyon's La Confluence district, above, and, left, a traditional 'bouchon' in its old town

HEMIS/ALAMY; MAURITIUS IMAGES/ALAMY

Lyon

Founded in 43BC, Lugdunum, as it was known then, quickly became one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. More than 2,000 years later it's still evolving, adding cutting-edge architecture, giant street murals, warehouses-turned-nightclubs (Le Sucre), and cocktail bars to its rich array of historic sites.

To start, taking the funicular up to Fourvière hill brings a panoramic view of the city and the dazzling Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourvière.

A 10-minute walk away are the Roman amphitheatre and fantastic Gallo-Roman museum, in a cool (in every sense) concrete bunker built into the hillside. The Musée des Confluences in the revitalised industrial area where the Rhône meets the Saône is another architectural marvel - all shimmering curves and glass walls. Art lovers will want to tick off the Musée des Beaux-Arts (Manet, Monet, Picasso, Matisse) too. Its shady courtyard is a lovely spot for a break between sites.

Weary limbs can be soothed with a dip at the Tony Bertrand Nautical Centre, a glorious 50-metre riverside pool on the bank of the Rhône (swimming hats obligatory, and men can't wear baggy shorts). The Lyon City Card (from €26 for 24 hours) gives access to museums, some tours and public transport.

Eat and drink
The famous Bouchon traditional restaurants - inspired by Les Mères Lyonnaises, a group of female chefs who set up homely restaurants in the 18th to the 20th centuries - specialise in traditional Lyonnaise cuisine, so expect meat-heavy menus featuring sausage, coq-au-vin, pate and offal. One of the most renowned is Le Bistrot d'Abel with a beautiful period interior.

Vegetarians are better off heading to the indoor market, Les Halles de Paul Bocuse, which offers endless, neat rows of cheese and patisserie, gourmet takeaway food and a choice of seafood, French, Italian and Iberian restaurant stalls. Bellotta Bellotta is known for delicate, refreshing gazpacho and its *pièce de résistance*, the ham volcano: strips of the thinnest *ibérico* ham served on a cone-shaped plate with a candle inside to gently warm the fat.

Heat in La Confluence is a laid-back, funkier addition to the gastro offering, with street food, cocktails and pop-up vintage stores.

Stay
Inspired by the city's silk trading history, boutique Hotel Silky in the central Presqu'île area has doubles from €101. Mob Hotel, opposite the Musée des Confluence, has an industrial vibe, with table football and nods to pop culture icons such as Frida Kahlo (doubles from €79). Note - it's a tram-ride away from the centre.

Get there
Eurostar from London St Pancras and then TGV to Lyon from either Paris (with a 30min transfer from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon) or Lille.
Isabel Choat

Puzzle solutions

(puzzles on page 78)

Answers to quiz
by Thomas Eaton

1 *Leonardo da Vinci (it is claimed).*
2 *First ascent.*
3 *Abraham Lincoln's assassination.*
4 *Project Gutenberg.*
5 *Haile Selassie.*
6 *Medieval knights.*
7 *Bucket list.*
8 *Jibril (Gabriel).*
9 *El: El Niño; El Tel; El Dorado; El Al.*
10 *Ores of common metals: aluminium; mercury; lead; iron; copper.*
11 *Art forgers.*
12 *Laws of cricket.*
13 *Capitals of US territories: US Virgin Islands; Guam; American Samoa; Northern Mariana Islands; Puerto Rico.*
14 *French game/quiz shows, versions of: Pointless; Deal or No Deal; Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*
15 *Constituencies of female UK prime ministers: Thatcher; May; Truss.*

Answers to Weekend Crossword
by Sy

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The kids' quiz
Molly Oldfield

Scan the code to send Molly a question for a future quiz

This quiz answers questions posed by children – will you get a better score than your parents?



ILLUSTRATION: HENNIE HAWORTH

1 Philip, 7, asks: what existed before the big bang?
A Just one giant star with creatures on it that organised the big bang
B Just the sun and the moon
C Scientists are not entirely certain on one idea
D The big quiet

2 Blythe, 7, asks: what is the brightest star we can see?
A Sirius
B Vega
C Arcturus
D All of the above

3 Julius, 8, asks: how do eyeballs see?
A Eyeballs have tiny mirrors at the sides and the back, which reflect pictures up into the brain
B When light hits the retina at the back of the eye, special cells turn it into electrical signals to send to the brain
C We have no idea how our eyeballs see
D The world pours into our pupils in our eyeballs and shoots up to our brain

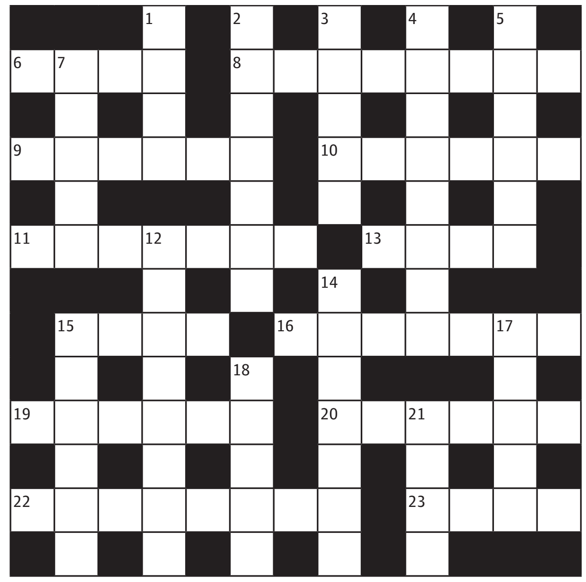
4 Ruby, 4, asks: can animals cry?
A No, only humans cry
B Yes, but not to show sadness or joy like humans
C All mammals cry when they are sad
D Whales are the only animals other than humans that can cry

5 Levi, 6, asks: why does ice float?
A Because ice is less dense than water
B Because it is cube-shaped
C Because the ice is much colder than the water
D Ice doesn't float on water - it always melts into it

Answers (no peeking!)
***1** C. Different scientists have different ideas. Stephen Hawking said that time did not exist before the big bang, so asking what came before it is meaningless. Others believe that our universe isn't unique and there exists an eternal multiverse with no real beginning at all.*
***2** D. It depends on the time of year and from where you're looking. In the northern hemisphere, in winter and early spring it's Sirius, but from April to September it's Arcturus, and from September to November it's Vega.*
***3** B. The special cells at the back of the eye, called photoreceptors, send the electrical signals through the optic nerve to the brain. The brain converts these into the images we see.*
***4** B. Lots of animals shed tears to clear debris like dust from their eyes. But we think humans may be the only creatures that cry when they are sad or happy - animals such as chimpanzees express sadness using vocal sounds.*
***5** A. Water has special hydrogen bonds, which means that when it freezes into solid ice, its structure is lighter than the liquid form, so it floats.*

Molly Oldfield hosts Everything Under the Sun, a weekly podcast (and book) answering children's questions. Does your child have a question? To submit one, scan the QR code above

Weekend crossword
Sy



Across
6 Poet who thought that for seduction candy was dandy but liquor quicker? (4)
8 Poet who counted the ways she loved you? (8)
9 ....Currie, author and former health minister in the Thatcher government (6)
10 Confectionery made from egg white, nuts and honey (6)
11 Poet who knew why the caged bird sings? (7)
13 Nickname for the Brazilian president (4)
15 Daphne ...., character in Frasier (4)
16 Poet who sang the body electric? (7)
19 A bell-shaped cover for indoor plants (6)
20 The second book of the Old Testament (6)
22 Poet who wished no sad songs be sung after she had died? (8)
23 The Slavic version of John (4)

Down
1 A citizen of what was formerly Siam? (4)
2 King David's third son (7)
3 Poet who saw petals on a wet, black bough? (5)
4 When William Faulkner saw light? (2,6)
5 The Turkish capital (6)
7 Poet who wanted the clocks stopped? (5)
12 The ...., 1973 horror film about a girl possessed by a demon (8)
14 The immortal bird of Arizona? (7)
15 Poet whose mind made a heaven of hell? (6)
17 Country, part of the Netherlands, in the Caribbean (5)
18 Poet who spread his dreams under your feet? (5)
21 US river and state (4)

Solutions to Crossword and Thomas Eaton's quiz *page 77*

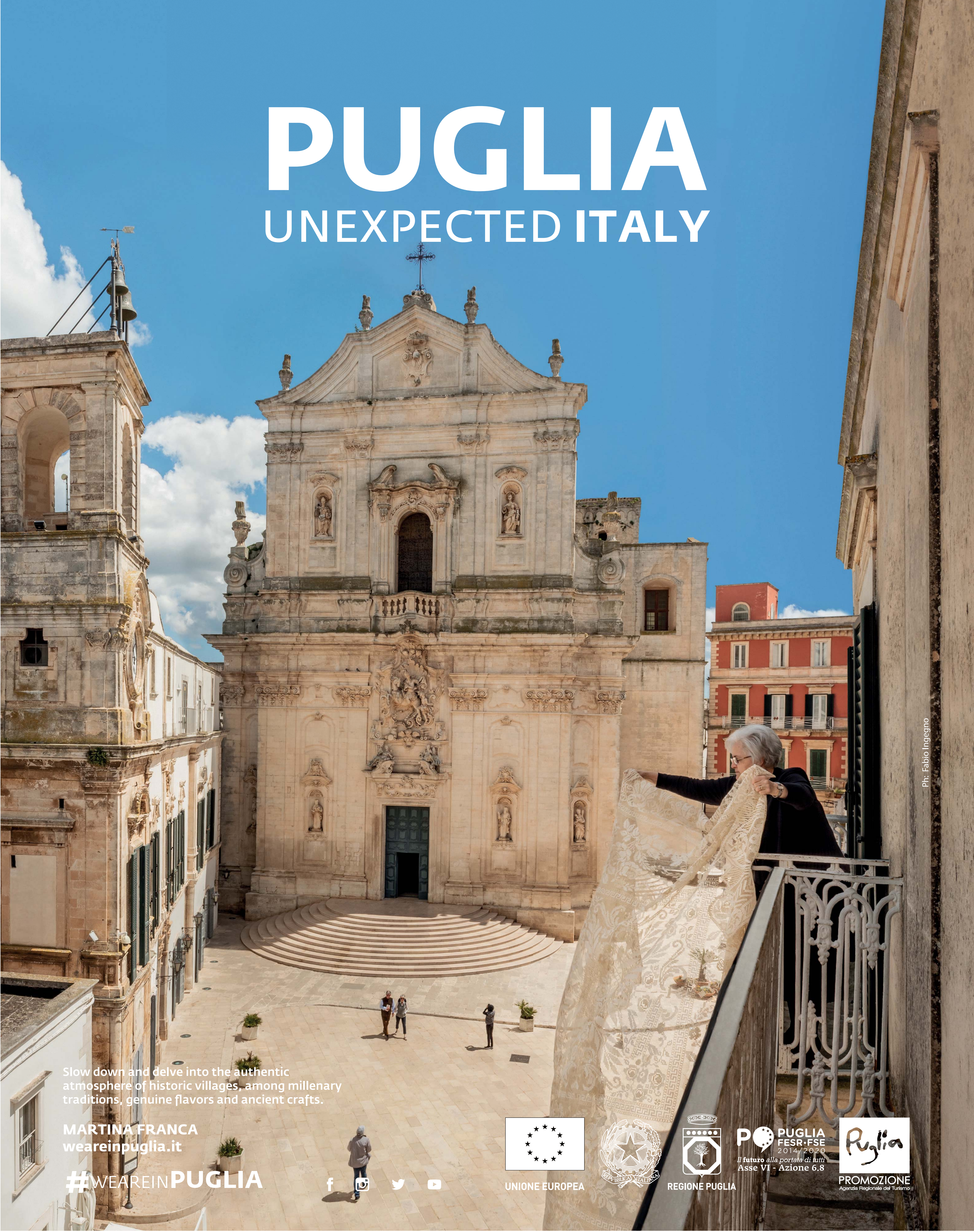
Quiz
Thomas Eaton

1 Whose Salvator Mundi went from £45 to $450m in 59 years?
2 In mountaineering, what achievement is abbreviated as FA?
3 Mary Surratt was hanged in 1865 for her part in what?
4 Which online library has over 70,000 free ebooks?
5 Which African monarch visited Jamaica in 1966?
6 Combatants in the sport of buhurt dress as what?
7 What record of life aspirations was popularised by a Jack Nicholson film?
8 Who revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad?
What links:
9 Pacific climate pattern; Terry Venables; mythical city of gold; Israeli airline?
10 Bauxite; cinnabar; galena; hematite; malachite?
11 Han van Meegeren; Tom Keating; Eric Hebborn; Pei-Shen Qian?
12 Creases (7); Intervals (11); Timed out (40); Unfair play (41)?
13 Charlotte Amalie; Hagåtña; Pago Pago; Saipan; San Juan?
14 Personne n'y avait pensé!; À prendre ou à laisser; Qui veut gagner des millions?
15 Finchley; Maidenhead; South West Norfolk?

Stephen Collins




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